

THE MAGAZINE OF

**Fantasy AND****Science Fiction**

MARCH

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JAY WILLIAMS

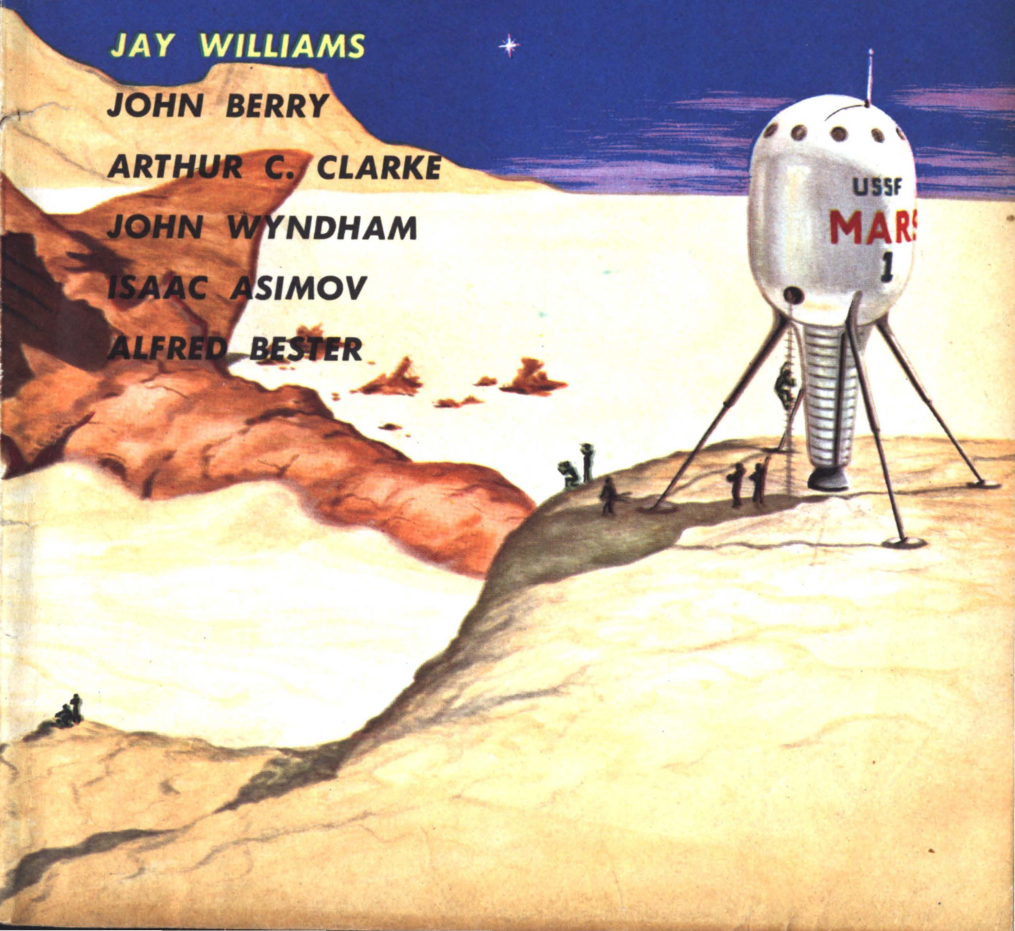
JOHN BERRY

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

JOHN WYNDHAM

ISAAC ASIMOV

ALFRED BESTER



# Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARCH Including Venture Science Fiction

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Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER

Robert P. Mills, EDITOR

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Isaac Asimov, CONTRIBUTING SCIENCE EDITOR

J. Francis McComas, ADVISORY EDITOR

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## **In this issue . . .**

This issue is an unusual one for these times—it contains *two* novelets featuring series characters: "Return," a novelet about the People by Zenna Henderson, and "Prometheus," a novelet about Father John Carmody by Philip Jose Farmer. However, if series characters are less usual than they used to be years ago, their quality is unquestionably higher . . . one indication of that is the large percentage which winds up in book form nowadays. For example, a collection of the People stories, tied together in novel form, is due out this spring, and Mr. Farmer proposes to go on from this second adventure of Father John Carmody en route to Wildenwooly with another novelet or two which will round out a book-length tale. . . . We'd be glad to hear what you think—do you like the idea of series characters showing up here occasionally . . . regularly . . . never? Your opinions will be much appreciated.

## **Coming next month . . .**

Another Brian W. Aldiss novelet, following up "Hothouse" (Feb. F&SF), offered on the assumption that most of you do like at least an occasional series approach. Titled "Nomansland," it too tells of a time in the future when plant life has become dominant in the world, and the comparatively few human beings, shrunk to one-fifth their previous size, are joined in constant battle with a hostile environment. . . .

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*Zenna Henderson's series of stories about the People, all of which originally appeared here, have now been collected in book form. Miss Henderson has added some new material, tying the stories together, and the volume, titled PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE is to be published by Doubleday on March 17, 1961. The book ends with the departure from Earth of many of the People for a new Home. The following new short novelet goes on with the story, telling of the first return to Earth after that departure. . . .*

## RETURN

*by Zenna Henderson*

I WAS AFRAID. WHEN THE swelling bulk of the earth blotted our ports, I was afraid for the first time. Fear was a sudden throb in my throat and, almost as an echo, a sudden throb from Child Within reminded me why it was that Earth was swelling in our ports after such a final goodbye. Drawn by my mood, Thann joined me as the slow turning of our craft slid the earth out of sight.

"Apprehensive?" he asked, his arm firm across my shoulders.

"A little." I leaned against him. "This business of trying to go back again is a little disquieting. You can't just slip back into the old mold. Either it's changed or you've changed—or both. I realize that."

"Well, the best we can do is give

it the old college try," he said. "And all for Child Within. I hope he appreciates it."

"Or she." I glanced down at my unfamiliar proportions. "As the case may be. But you do understand, don't you?" Need for reassurance lifted my voice a little. "Thann, we just had to come back. I just couldn't bear the thought of Child Within being born in that strange—tidy—" My voice trailed off and I leaned more heavily, sniffing.

"Listen, Debbie - my - dear!" Thann shook me gently and hugged me roughly. "I know, I know! While I don't share your aching necessity for Earth, I agreed, didn't I? Didn't I sweat blood in that dern Motiver school,



learning to manipulate this craft? Aren't we almost there?"

"Almost there! Oh Thann! Oh Thann!" Our craft had completed another of its small revolutions, and Earth marched determinedly across the port again. I pressed myself against the pane, wanting to reach—to gather in the featureless mists, the blurred beauties of the world, and hold them so close—so close that even Child Within would move to their wonder.

I'm a poor hand at telling time. I couldn't tell you even to within a year how long ago it was that Shua lifted the Ship from the flat at Cougar Canyon and started the trip from Earth to The Home. I remember how excited I was. Even my pony tail had trembled as the great adventure began. Thann swears he was standing so close to me at Take-off that the pony tail tickled his nose. But I don't remember him. I don't even remember seeing him at all during the long trip when the excitement of being evacuated from Earth dulled to the routine of travel and later became resurrected as anxiety about what The Home would be like.

I don't remember him at all until that desolate day on The Home when I stood at the end of the so-precise little lane that wound so consciously lovely from the efficient highway. I was counting, through the blur of my tears, the

precisely 26 trees interspersed at suitable intervals by seven clumps of underbrush. He just happened to be passing at the moment and I looked up at him and choked, "Not even a weed! Not one!"

Astonished, he folded his legs and hovered a little above eyelevel.

"What good's a weed?"

"At least it shows individuality!" I shut my eyes, not caring that by so doing the poised tears consolidated and fell. "I'm so sick of perfection!"

"Perfection?" He lifted a little higher above me, his eyes on some far sight. "I certainly wouldn't call The Home perfect yet. From here I can see the North Reach. We've only begun to nibble at that. The preliminary soil crew is just starting analysis." He dropped down beside me. "We can't waste time and space on weeds. It'll take long enough to make the whole of The Home habitable without using energy on non-essentials."

"They'll find out!" I stubbornly proclaimed. "Someday they'll find out that weeds *are* essentials. Man wasn't made for such—such *neatness*. He has to have unimportant clutter to relax in!"

"Why haven't you presented these fundamental doctrines to the Old Ones?" He laughed at me.

"Have I not!" I retorted. "Well, maybe not to the Old Ones, but I've already expressed myself, and further more, Mr.— Oh, I'm sorry, I'm Debbie—"

"I'm Thannel," he grinned.

"—Thannel, I'll have you know other wiser heads than mine have come to the same conclusion. Maybe not in my words, but they mean the same thing. This artificiality—this—this— The People aren't *meant* to live divorced from the—the—" I spread my hands. "Soil, I guess you could say. They lose something when everything gets—gets paved."

"Oh, I think we'll manage," he smiled. "Memory can sustain."

"Memory? Oh Thann, remember the tangle of blackberry vines in back of Kroginold's house? How we used to burrow under the scratchy, cool, green twilight in under these vines and hunt for berries—cool ones from the shadows, and warm ones from the sun and always at least one thorn in the thumb as payment for trespassing. Mmmm—" Eyes closed, I lost myself in the memory.

Then my eyes flipped open. "Or are you from the other Home? Maybe you've never even seen Earth."

"Yes, I have," he said, suddenly sober. "I'm from Bendo. I haven't many happy memories of Earth. Until your Group found us, we had a pretty thin time of it."

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said. "Bendo was our God Bless for a long time when I was little."

"Thank you." He straightened briskly and grinned. "How about a race to the twenty-third despised

tree, just to work off a little steam!"

And the two of us lifted and streaked away, a yard above the careful gravel of the lane, but I got the giggles so badly that I blundered into the top of the twenty-first tree and had to be extricated gingerly from its limbs. Together we guiltily buried at its foot the precious tiny branch I had broken off in my blundering, and then, with muffled laughter and guilty back-glances, we went our separate ways.

That night I lay and waited for the pale blue moon of The Home to vault into the sky, and thought about Earth and the Other Home.

The Other Home was first, of course—the beautiful prototype of this Home. But *it* had weeds! And all the tangled splendor of wooded hillsides and all soaring upreach naked peaks and the sweet uncarving, uncountable profusion of life, the same as Earth. But The Home died—blasted out of the heavens by a cosmic Something that shattered it and scattered The People like birds from a falling tree. Part of them found this Home—or the bare bones of it—and started to remake it into The Home. Others found refuge on Earth. We had it rough for a long time because we were separated from each other. Besides, we were Different, with a capital D, and some of us didn't survive the adjustment period. Slowly though, we were Gathered In until there

were two main Groups—Cougar Canyon and Bendo. Bendo lived in a hell of concealment and fear long after Cougar Canyon had managed to adjust to an Outsiders' world.

Then that day—even now my breath caught at the wonder of that day when the huge ship from the New Home drifted down out of the skies and came to rest on the flat beyond the school house!

And everyone had to choose. Stay or go. My family chose to go. More stayed. But the Oldest, Cougar Canyon's leader, blind, crippled, dying from what The Crossing had done to him, he went. But you should see him now! You should see him *see*! And Obla came too. Some times I went to her house just to touch her hands. She had none, you know, on Earth. Nor legs nor eyes, and hardly a face. An explosion had stripped her of all of them. But now, because of transgraph and regeneration, she is becoming whole again—except perhaps her heart—but that's another story.

Once the wonder of the trip and the excitement of living without concealment, without having to watch every movement so's not to shock Outsiders, had died a little, I got homesicker and homesicker. At first I fought it as a silly thing, a product of letdown, or idleness. But a dozen new interests, frenzied activities that consumed every waking moment, did

nothing to assuage the aching need in me. I always thought homesickness was a childish, transitory thing. Well, most of it is, but occasionally there is a person who actually sickens of it and does not recover, short of return. And I guess I was one of those. It was as though I were breathing with one lung or trying to see with one eye. Sometimes the growing pain became an anguish so physical that I'd crouch in misery, hugging my hurt to me, trying to contain it between my knees and my chest—trying to ease it. Sometimes I could manage a tear or two that relieved a little—such as that day in the lane with Thann.

"Thann!" I turned from the port. "Isn't it about time—"

"One up on you, Debbie-my-dear," Thann called from the Motive room. "I'm just settling into the old groove. Got to get us slowed down before we scorch our little bottoms and maybe even singe Child Within."

"Don't joke about it!" I said. "Remember, the first time the atmosphere gave us too warm a welcome to Earth. Ask The Oldest."

"The Power be with us," came Thann's quick answering thought.

"And the Name and the Presence," I echoed, bowing my head as my fingers moved to the Sign and then clasped above Child Within. I moved over to the couch and lay down, feeling the almost

imperceptible slowing of our little craft.

Thann and I started Two-ing not long after we met and, at Flah-men Gathering time, we Bespoke one another and, just before Festival time, we were married.

Perhaps all this time I was hoping that starting a home of my own would erase my longing for Earth and perhaps Thann hoped the same thing. The Home offered him almost all he wanted and he had a job he loved. He felt the pioneering thrill of making a new world and was contented. But my need didn't evaporate. Instead, it intensified. I talked it over with the Sorter for our Group (a Sorter cares for our emotional and mental problems) because I was beginning to hate—oh, not hate! That's such a poisonous thing to have festering in your mind. But my perspective was getting so twisted that I was making both myself and Thann unhappy. She Sorted me deftly and thoroughly—and I went home to Thann and he started training to develop his latent Motive ability. We both knew we could well lose our lives trying to return to Earth, but we had to try. Anyway, I had to try, especially after I found out about Child Within. I told Thann and his face lighted up as I knew it would, but—

"This ought to make a bond between you and The Home," he said. "Now you'll find unsuspected

virtues in this land you've been spurning."

I felt my heart grow cold. "Oh, no, Thann!" I said. "Now more than ever we must go. Our child *can't* be born here. He must be of Earth. And I want to be able to enjoy this Child within—"

"This is quite a Child Without," said Thann, tempering the annoyance in his voice by touching my cheek softly, "Crying for a lollipop, Earth flavored. Ah, well!" He gathered me into his arms. "Hip-pity-hop to the Candy Shop!"

A high thin whistle signaled the first brush of Earth's atmosphere against our craft—as though Earth were reaching up to scrape tenuous incandescent fingers against our underside. I cleared my mind and concentrated on the effort ahead. I'm no Motiver, but Thann might need my strength before we landed.

Before we landed! Setting down on the flat again, under Old Baldy! And seeing them all again! Valancy and Karen and the Francher Kid. Oh, the song the Kid would be singing would be nothing to the song my heart would be singing! *Home! Child Within! Home again!* I pressed my hands against the swell of Child Within. *Pay attention* I admonished. *Be ready for your first consciousness of Earth.* "I won't look," I told myself. "Until we touch down on the flat. I'll keep my eyes shut!" And I did.

So when the first splashing crash came, I couldn't believe it. My eyes opened to the sudden inrush of water and I was gasping and groping in complete bewilderment trying to find air. "Thann! Thann!" I was paddling awkwardly, trying to keep my head above water. What had happened? How could we have so missed the Canyon—even as inexperienced a Motiver as Thann was? Water? Water to *drown* in, anywhere near the Canyon?

There was a gulp and the last bubble of air belched out of our turning craft. I was belched out through a jagged hole along with the air.

*Thann! Thann!* I abandoned vocal calling and spread my cry clear across the band of sub-speech. No reply—no reply! I bobbed on the surface of the water, gasping. *Oh Child, stay Within. Be Careful. Be Careful! It isn't time yet. It isn't time!*

I shook my dripping hair out of my eyes and felt a nudge against my knees. Down I went into darkness, groping, groping—and found him! Inert, unresponsive, a dead weight in my arms. The breathless agony of struggle ended in the slippery mud of a rocky shore. I dragged him up far enough that his head was out of the water, listened breathlessly for a heartbeat, then, mouth to mouth, I breathed life back into him and lay gasping beside him in the

mud, one hand feeling the struggle as his lungs labored to get back into rhythm. The other hand was soothing Child Within. *Not now, not now! Wait—wait!*

When my own breathing steadied, I tore strips off my tattered travel suit and bound up his head, staunching the blood that persistently threaded down from the gash above his left ear. Endlessly, endlessly, I lay there listening to his heart—to my heart—too weak to move him, too weak to move myself. Then the rhythm of his breathing changed and I felt his uncertain thoughts, questioning, asking. My thoughts answered his until he knew all I knew about what had happened. He laughed a ghost of a laugh.

"Is this untidy enough for you?" And I broke down and cried.

We lay there in mud and misery, gathering our strength. I started once to a slithering splash across the water from us and felt a lapping of water over my feet. I pulled myself up on one elbow and peered across at the barren hillside. A huge chunk of it had broken off and slithered down into the water. The scar was raw and ragged in the late evening sunshine.

"Where did it come from?" I asked, wonderingly. "All this water! And there is Baldy, with his feet all awash. What happened?"

"The rain is raining," said Thann, his voice choked with

laughter, his head rolling on the sharp shale of the bank. "The rain is raining—and don't go near the water!" His nonsense ended with a small moan that tore my heart.

"Thann! Thann! Let's get out of this mess. Come on. Can you lift? Help me—"

He lifted his head and let it fall back with a *thunk* against the rocks. His utter stillness panicked me. I sobbed as I reached into my memory for the inanimate lift. It seemed a lifetime before I finally got him up out of the mud and hovered him hand high above the bank. Cautiously I pushed him along, carefully guiding him between the bushes and trees until I found a flat place that crunched with fallen oak leaves. I platted him softly to the ground and for a long time I lay there by him, my hand on his sleeve, not even able to think coherently about what had happened.

The sun was gone when I shivered and roused myself. I was cold and Thann was shaken at intervals by an icy shuddering. I scrambled around in the fading light and gathered wood together and laid a fire. I knelt by the neat stack and gathered myself together for the necessary concentration. Finally, after sweat had gathered on my forehead and trickled into my eyes, I managed to produce a tiny spark that sputtered and hesitated and then took a shining bite out of a dry leaf. I rubbed my

hands above the tiny flame and waited for it to grow. Then I lifted Thann's head to my lap and started the warmth circulating about us.

When our shivering stopped, I suddenly caught my breath and grimaced wryly. How quickly we forget! I was getting as bad as an Outsider! And I clicked my personal shield on, extending it to include Thann. In the ensuing warmth, I looked down at Thann, touching his mud-stained cheek softly, letting my love flow to him like a river of strength. I heard his breathing change and he stirred under my hands.

"Are we Home?" he asked.

"We're on Earth," I said.

"We left Earth years ago," he chided. "Why do I hurt so much?"

"We came back." I kept my voice steady with an effort. "Because of me—and Child Within."

"Child Within—" His voice strengthened. "Hippity hop to the candy shop," he remembered. "What happened?"

"The Canyon isn't here any more," I said, raising his shoulders carefully into my arms. "We crashed into water. Everything's gone. We lost everything." My heart squeezed for the tiny gowns Child Within would never wear.

"Where are our People?" he asked.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know."

"When you find them, you'll be all right," he said drowsily.

"We'll be all right," I said sharply, my arms tightening around him. "In the morning, we'll find them and Bethie will find out what's wrong with you and we'll mend you."

He sat up slowly, haggard and dirty in the upflare of fire light, his hand going to his bandaged head. "I'm broken," he said. "A lot of places. Bones have gone where bones should never go. I will be Called."

"Don't say it!" I gathered him desperately into my arms. "Don't say it, Thann! We'll find The People!" He crumpled down against me, his cheek pressed to the curve of Child Within.

I screamed then, partly because my heart was being torn shred by shred into an aching mass—partly because my neglected little fire was happily crackling away from me, munching the dry leaves, sampling the brush, roaring softly into the lower branches of the scrub oak. I had set the hillside afire! And the old terror was upon me, the remembered terror of a manzanita slope blazing on Baldy those many forgotten years ago.

I cradled Thann to me. So far the fire was moving away from us, but soon, soon—

"No! No!" I cried. "Let's go home, Thann! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Let's go home! I didn't mean to bring you to death! I hate this world! I hate it! Thann, Thann!"

I've tried to forget it. It comes back sometimes. Sometimes again I'm so shaken that I can't even protect myself any more and I'm gulping smoke and screaming over Thann. Other times I hear again the rough, disgusted words, "Gol-dinged tenderfoots! Setting fire to the whole gol-dinged mountain. There's a law!"

Those were the first words I ever heard from Seth. My first sight of him was of a looming giant, twisted by flaring flames and drifting smoke and my own blurring tears.

It was another day before I thought again. I woke to find myself on a camp cot, a rough khaki blanket itching my chin. My bare arms were clean but scratched. Child Within was rounding the blanket smoothly. I close my eyes and lay lapped in peace for a moment. Then my eyes flew open and I called, "Thann! Thann!" and struggled with the blanket.

"Take it easy! Take it easy!" Strong hands pushed me back against the thin musty pillow. "You're stark, jay-nekkid under that blanket. You can't go tearing around that way." And those were the first words I heard from Glory.

She brought me a faded, crumpled cotton robe and helped me into it. "Them outlandish duds you had on'll take a fairsized swatch of fixing 'fore they're fit t' wear." Her hands were clumsy but careful. She chuckled. "Not



sure there's room for both of yens in this here wrapper."

I knelt by the cot in the other room. There were only three rooms in the house. Thann lay, thin and unmoving as paper, under the lumpy comforter.

"He wants awful bad to go home." Glory's voice tried to moderate to a sick room tone. "He won't make it," she said bluntly.

"Yes, he will, Yes, he will! All we have to do is find The People—"

"Which people?" asked Glory.

"The People!" I cried. "The People who live in the Canyon."

"The Canyon? You mean Cougar Canyon? Been no people there for three-four years. Ever since the dam got finished and the lake started rising."

"Where—where did they go?" I whimpered, my hands tightening on the edge of the cot.

"Dunno." Glory snapped a matchhead with her thumbnail and lighted a makin's cigarette.

"But if we don't find them, Thann will die!"

"He will anyway less'n them folks is magic," said Glory.

"They are!" I cried. "They're magic!"

"Oh?" said Glory, squinting her eyes against the eddy of smoke. "Oh?"

Thann's head moved and his eyes opened. I bent my head to catch any whisper from him, but his voice came loud and clear.

"All we have to do is fix the craft and we can go back Home."

"Yes, Thann." I hid my eyes against my crossed wrists on the cot. "We'll leave right away. Child Within will wait 'til we get Home." I felt Child Within move to the sound of my words.

"He shouldn't oughta talk," said Glory. "He's all smashed inside. He'll be bleeding again in a minute."

"Shut up!" I spun on my knees and flared at her. "You don't know anything about it! You're nothing but a stupid Outsider. He won't die! He won't!"

Glory dragged on her cigarette. "I hollered some, too, when my son Davy got caught in a cave-in. He was smashed. He died." She flicked ashes onto the bare plank floor. "God calls them. They go—"

"I'm Called!" Thann caught the familiar word. "I'm Called! What will you do, Debbie-my-dear? What about Child—" A sudden bright froth touched the corner of his mouth and he clutched my wrist. "Home is so far away," he sighed. "Why did we have to leave? Why did we leave?"

"Thann, Thann!" I buried my face against his quiet side. The pain in my chest got worse and worse and I wished someone would stop that awful babbling and screaming. How could I say goodbye to my whole life with that ghastly noise going on? Then my fingers were pried open and I lost

the touch of Thann. The black noisy chaos took me completely.

"He's dead." I slumped in the creaky rocker. Where was I? How long had I been here? My words came so easily, so accustomedly, they must be a repetition of a repetition. "He's dead and I hate you. I hate Seth. I hate Earth. You're all Outsiders. I hate Child Within I hate myself."

"There," said Glory as she snipped a thread with her teeth and stuck the needle in the front of her plaid shirt. My words had no impact on her, though they almost shocked me as I listened to them. Why didn't she notice what I said? Too familiar? "There's at least one nightgown for Child Within." She grinned. "When I was your age, folks woulda died of shock to think of calling a baby unborn a name like that. I thought maybe these sugar sacks might come in handy sometime. Didn't know it'd be for baby clothes."

"I hate you," I said, hurdling past any lingering shock. "No lady wears levis and plaid shirts with buttons that don't match. Nor cuts her hair like a man and lets her face go all wrinkledy. Oh, well, what does it matter? You're only a stupid Outsider. You're not of The People, that's for sure. You're not on our level."

"For that, thanks be to the Lord." Glory smoothed the clumsy little gown across her knee. "I was

taught people are people, no matter their clothes or hair. I don't know nothing about your folks or what level they're on, but I'm glad my arthritis won't let me stoop as low as—" She shrugged and laid the gown aside. She reached over to the battered dresser and retrieved something she held out to me. "Speaking of looks, take a squint at what Child Inside's got to put up with."

I slapped the mirror out of her hands—and the mad glimpse of rumpled hair, swollen eyes, reddled face and a particularly horrible half-sneer on lax lips—slapped it out of her hands, stopped its flight in mid-air, spun it up to the sagging plasterboard ceiling, swooped it out with a crash through one of the few remaining whole window panes and let it smash against a pine tree outside the house.

"Do *that!*" I cried triumphantly. "Even child's play like that, you can't do. You're stupid!"

"Could be." Glory picked up a piece of the shattered window glass. "But today I fed my man and the stranger within my gates. I made a gown for a naked baby. What have you done that's been so smart? You've busted, you've ruined, you've whined and hated. If that's being smart, I'll stay stupid." She pitched the glass out of the broken window. "And I'll slap you silly, like I would any spoiled brat, if you break anything else."

"Oh, Glory, oh. Glory!" I squeezed my eyes shut. "I killed him! I killed him! I made him come. If we'd stayed Home. If I hadn't insisted. If—"

"If," said Glory heavily, lifting the baby gown. "If Davy hadn'ta died, this'd be for my grandkid, most likely. If-ing is the quickest way I know to get the blue mully-grubs."

She folded the gown and put it away in the dresser drawer. "You haven't told me yet when Child Within is s'posed to come With-out." She reached for the makin's and started to build a cigarette.

"I don't know," I said, staring down at my tight hands. "I don't care." What was Child Within compared to the pain within?

"You'll care plenty," snapped Glory around the smooth curve of the cigarette paper, "if'n you have a hard time and no doctor. You can go ahead and die if you want to, but I'm thinking of Child Within."

"It'd be better if he died, too," I cried. "Better than having to grow up in this stupid, benighted world, among savages—"

"What'd you want to come back so bad for then?" asked Glory. "You admit it was you wanted to come."

"Yes," I moaned, twisting my hands. "I killed him. If we'd only stayed Home. If I hadn't—"

I lay in the dusk, my head pil-

lowed on Thann's grave. Thann's grave— The words had a horrible bitterness on my tongue. "How can I bear it, Thann?" I whimpered. "I'm lost. I can't go Home. The People are gone. What'll I do with Child inside? How can we ever bear it, living with Outsiders? Oh, Call me too, Call me too!" I let the rough gravel of the grave scratch against my cheek as I cried.

And yet I couldn't feel that Thann was there. Thann was a part of another life—a life that didn't end in the mud and misery of a lakeside. He was part of a happy adventure, a glad welcome back to the Earth we had thought was a thing of the past, a tumultuous reunion with all the dear friends we had left behind—the endless hours of vocal and sub-vocal news exchange—Thann was a part of that. Not a part of this haggard me, that squalid shack teetering on the edge of a dry creek, this bulging, unlovely, ungainly creature muddying her face in the coarse gravel of a barren hillside.

I roused to the sound of footsteps in the dark, and voices.

"—nuttier than a fruitcake," said Glory. "It takes some girls like that, just getting pregnant, and then this here other shock—"

"What's she off on now?" It was Seth's heavy voice.

"Oh, more of the same. Being

magic. Making things fly. She broke that lookin' glass Davie gave me the Christmas before the cave-in." She cleared her throat. "I picked up the pieces. They're in the drawer."

"She oughta have a good hidin'!" Anger was thick in Seth's voice.

"She'll get one if'n she does anything like that again! Oh, and some more about the Home and flying through space and wanting them people again."

"You know," said Seth thoughtfully, "I heard stuff about some folks used to live around here. Funny stuff."

"All people are funny." Glory's voice was nearer. "Better get her back into the house before she catches her death of live-forevers."

I stared up at the ceiling in the dark. Time was again a word without validity. I had no idea how long I had huddled myself in my sodden misery. How long had I been here with Glory and Seth? Faintly in my consciousness, I felt a slight stirring of wonder about Seth and Glory. What did they live on? What were they doing out here in the unfruitful hills? This shack was some forgotten remnant of an old ghost town—no electricity, no water, four crazy walls held together by, and holding up, a shattered roof. For food—beans, cornbread, potatoes, prunes, coffee.

I clasped my throbbing temples with both hands, my head rolling from side to side. But what did it matter? What did anything matter any more? Wild grief surged up in my throat and I cried out, "Mother! Mother!" and felt myself drowning in the icy immensity of the lonely space I had drifted across—

Then there were warm arms around me and a shoulder under my cheek, the soft scratch of hair against my face, a rough hand gently pressing my head to warmth and aliveness.

"There, there!" Glory's voice rumbled gruffly soft through her chest to my ear. "It'll pass. Time and the mercy of God will make it bearable. There, there!" She held me and let me blot my tears against her. I didn't know when she left me and I slept dreamlessly.

Next morning at breakfast—before which I had washed my face and combed most of the tangles out of my hair—I paused over my oatmeal and canned milk, spoon poised. "What do you do for a living, Seth?" I asked.

"Living?" Seth stirred another spoonful of sugar into the mush. "We scratch our beans and bacon outa the Skagmore. It's a played-out mine, but there's a few two-bittin' seams left. We work it hard enough, we get by—but it takes both of us. Glory's as good as a man—better'n some."

"How come you aren't working at the Golden Turkey or the Iron Duke?" I wondered where I had got those names even as I asked.

"Can't," said Glory. "He's got silicosis and arthritis. Can't work steady. Times are you'd think he was coughing up his lungs. Hasn't had a bad time though since you came."

"If I were a Healer," I said, "I could cure your lungs and joints. But I'm not. I'm really not much of anything." I blinked down at my dish. *I'm nothing. I'm nothing without Thann.* I gulped. "I'm sorry I broke your window and your mirror, Glory. I shouldn't have. You can't help being an Outsider."

"Apology accepted," Glory grinned dourly. "But it's still kinda drafty."

"There's a whole window in that shack down-creek a ways," said Seth. "When I get the time, I'll go get it. Begins to look like the Skagmore might last right up into winter, though."

"Wish we could get some of that good siding—what's left of it—and fill in a few of our holes," said Glory, tipping up the scarred blue and white coffee pot for the last drop of coffee.

"I'll get the stuff soon's this seam pinches out," promised Seth.

I walked down-creek after breakfast, feeling for the first time the sun on my face, seeing for the

first time the untidy tangle and thoughtless profusion of life around me, the dream that had drawn me back to this tragedy. I sat down against a boulder, clasping my knees. My feet had known the path to this rock. My back was familiar with its sun-warmed firmness, but I had no memory of it. I had no idea how long I had been eased of my homesickness.

Now that that particular need was filled and that ache soothed, it was hard to remember how vital and how urgent the whole thing had been. It was like the memory of pain—a purely intellectual thing. But once it had been acute—so acute that Thann had come to his death for it.

I looked down at myself and for the first time I noticed I was wearing jeans and a plaid shirt—Glory's, indubitably. The jeans were precariously held together, bulging under the plaid shirt, by a huge blanket pin. I smiled a little. Outsider makeshift—well, let it stay. They don't know any better.

Soon I aroused and went on down-creek until I found the shack Seth had mentioned. It had two good windows left. I stood in front of the first one, reaching into my memory for my informal training. Then I settled to the job at hand.

Slowly, steadily, nails began to withdraw from around the windows. With toil and sweat and a

few frustrated tears, I got the two windows out intact, though the walls around them would never be the same again. I had had no idea how windows were put into a house. After the windows, it was fairly simple to detach the few good lengths of siding left. I stacked them neatly, one by one, drifting them into place. I jumped convulsively at a sudden crunching crash, then laughed shakily to see that the poor old shack had disintegrated completely, having been deprived of its few solid members. Lifting the whole stack of my salvage to carrying height, I started back up creek, panting and sweating, stumbling and pushing the load ahead of me until I got smart and, lifting, perched on the pile of planks, I directed my airborne caravan up-creek.

Glory and Seth were up at the mine. I set the things down by the house and then, suddenly conscious of weariness, made my way to Thann's grave. I patted the gravelly soil softly and whispered, "They'll like it won't they, Thann? They're so like children. Now Glory will forget about the mirror. Poor little Outsider!"

Glory and Seth were stupefied when they saw my loot leaning against the corner of the shack. I told them where I'd got the stuff and how I had brought it back.

Seth spat reflectively and looked sideways at Glory. "Who's nuts now?" he asked.

"Okay, okay," said Glory. "You go tell that Jick Bennett how this stuff got here. Maybe he'll believe you."

"Did I do something wrong?" I asked. "Did this belong to Mr. Bennett?"

"No, no," said Glory. "Not to him nor nobody. He's just a friend of ours. Him and Seth're always shooting the breeze together. No, it's just—just—" She gestured hopelessly then turned on Seth. "Well? Get the hammer. You want her to do the hammering, too?"

We three labored until the sun was gone and a lopsided moon had pushed itself up over the shoulder of Baldy. The light glittered on the smug wholeness of the two windows of the shack and Glory sighed with tired satisfaction. Balling up the rag she had taken from the other broken window, she got it ready to throw away. "First time my windows've been wind-tight since we got here. Come winter that's nothing to sneeze at!"

"Sneeze at!" Seth shook with silent gargantuan laughter. "Nothing to sneeze at!"

"Glory!" I cried. "What have you there? Don't throw it away!"

"What?" Glory retrieved the wad from the woodpile. "It's only the rags we peeled off'n both of yens before we put you in bed. And another hunk we picked up to beat out the fire. Ripped to tat-

ters. Heavy old canvassy stuff, anyway."

"Give it to me, Glory," I said. And took the bundle from her wondering hands. "It's *tekla*," I said. "It's never useless. Look." I spread out several of the rags on a flat stone near the creek. In the unreal blend of sunset and moonrise, I smoothed a fingernail along two overlapping edges. They merged perfectly into a complete whole. Quickly I sealed the other rips and snags and, lifting the sheet of *tekla* shook off the dirt and wrinkles. "See, it's as good as new. Bring the rest in the house. We can have some decent clothes again." I smiled at Glory's pained withdrawal. "After all, Glory, you must admit this pin isn't going to hold Child Within much longer!"

Seth lighted the oil lamp above the table and I spread *tekla* all over it, mending a few rips I'd missed.

"Here's some more," said Glory. "I stuck it in that other stovepipe hole. It's the hunk we used to beat the fire out with. It's pretty holey."

"It doesn't matter," I said, pinching out the charred spots. "What's left is still good." And she and Seth hung fascinated around the table, watching me. I couldn't let myself think of Thann, flushed with excitement, trying to be so casual as he tried on his travel suit to show me, so long—so long ago—so yesterday, really.

"Here's a little bitty piece you dropped," said Seth, retrieving it.

"It's too little for any good use," said Glory.

"Oh, no!" I said, a little intoxicated by their wonder and by a sudden upsurge of consciousness that I was able to work so many—to them—miracles. "Nothin's too small. See. That's one reason we had it made so thick. To spread it thin when we've used it." I took the tiny swatch of *tekla* and began to stretch and shape it, smoother and farther. Farther and farther until it flowed over the edges of the table and the worn design on the oilcloth began to be visible through it.

"What color do you like, Glory?" I asked.

"Blue," breathed Glory, wonderingly. "Blue."

I stroked blue into the *tekla*, quickly evened the edges and, lifting the fragile, floating chiffony material, draped it over Glory's head. For a half moment I saw my own mother looking with shining eyes at me through the lovely melt of color. Then I was hugging Glory and saying, "That's for the borrow of your jeans and shirt!" And she was fingering unbelievably the delicate fabric. *There*, I thought, *I even hugged her. It really doesn't matter to me that she's just an Outsider.*

"Magic!" said Glory. "Don't touch it!" she cried, as Seth



reached a curious hand towards it.

"He can't hurt it," I laughed. "It's strong enough to use for a parachute—or a trampoline!"

"How did you do it?" asked Seth, lifting another small patch of *tekla*, his fingers tugging at it.

"Well, first you have to—" I groped for an explanation. "You see, first— Well, then, after that—oh, I don't know!" I cried. "I just know you do it." I took the piece from him and snatched it into scarf length, stroking it red and woolly, and wound it around his neck and bewildered face.

I slept that night in a gown of *tekla*, but Glory stuck to her high necked crinkle-crepe gown and Seth scorned night clothes. But after Glory blew out the light and before she disappeared behind the denim curtain that gave me part of the front room for a bedroom of my own, she leaned over, laughing in the moonlight to whisper, "He's got that red thing under his pillow. I seen it sticking out from under!"

Next morning I busied myself with the precious *tekla*, thinning it, brushing up a soft nap, fashioning the tiny thing Child Within would be needing some day. Glory stayed home from the mine and tried to help. After the first gown was finished, I sat looking at it, dreaming child-dreams any mother does with a first gown. I was roused by the sound of a drawer

softly closing and saw Glory disappear into the kitchen. I went over and opened the drawer. The awkward little sugar-sack gown was gone. I smiled pityingly. *She realized*, I said to myself. *She realized how inappropriate a gown like that would be for child of The People.*

That night Seth dropped the lamp chimney and it smashed to smithereens.

"Well, early to bed," sighed Glory. "But I did want to get on with this shirt for Seth." She smoothed the soft, wooly *tekla* across her lap. We had figured it down pretty close, but it came out a dress for each of us and a shirt for Seth as well as a few necessities for Child Inside. I blessed again the generousness of our travel clothes and the one small part of a blanket that had survived.

"If you've got a dime," I said, returning to the problem of light, "I haven't a cent—but if you've got a dime, I can make a light—"

Seth chuckled. "If we've got a dime, I'd like to see it. We're 'bout due for a trip into town to sell our ore. Got any change, Glory?"

Glory dumped her battered purse out on the bed and stirred the contents vigorously. "One dollar bill," she said. "Coffee and sugar for next week. A nickel and three pennies. No dime—"

"Maybe a nickel will work," I said dubiously. "We always used dimes or discs of *argen*. I never tried a nickel." I picked up the coin and fingered it. Boy! Would this ever widen their eyes! If I could remember Dita's instructions. I spun the coin and concentrated. I spun the coin and frowningly concentrated. I spun the coin. I blushed. I sweated. "It'll work," I reassured the skeptical side glances of Seth and Glory. I closed my eyes and whispered silently, "We need it. Bless me. Bless me."

I spun the coin.

I saw the flare behind my eyelids and opened them to the soft, slightly blue handful of light the nickel had become. Seth and Glory said nothing, but their eyes blinked and were big and wondering enough to please anyone, as they looked into my cupped hand.

"A dime is brighter," I said, "but this is enough for here, I guess. Only thing is, you can't blow it out."

The two exchanged glances and Seth smiled weakly. "Nutty as a fruitcake," he said. "But don't it shine pretty!"

The whole room was flooded with the gentle light. I put it down in the middle of the table, but it was too direct for our eyes, so Seth balanced it on the top of a window sill and Glory picked up the half-finished shirt from the floor where it had fallen and asked

in a voice that only slightly trembled, "Could you do this seam right here, Debbie? That'll finish this sleeve."

That night we had to put the light in a baking powder can with the lid on tight when we went to bed. The cupboard had leaked too much light and so had the dresser. I was afraid to damp the glow for fear I might not be able to do it again the next night. A Lady Bountiful has to be careful of her reputation.

I sat on the bank above the imperceptibly growing lake and watched another chunk of the base of Baldy slide down into the water. Around me was the scorched hillside and the little flat where I had started the fire. Somewhere under all that placid brown water was our craft and everything we had of The Home. I felt my face harden and tighten with sorrow. I got up awkwardly and made my way down the steep slant of the bank. I leaned against a boulder and stirred the muddy water with one sneaker-clad toe. That block of *tekla*, the seed box, the pictures, the letters. I let the tears wash downwards unchecked. All the dreams and plans. The pain caught me so that I nearly doubled up. My lips stretched thinly. How physical mental pain can be! If only it could be amputated like— Pain caught me again. I gasped and clutched the boulder

behind me. *This is pain*, I cried to myself. *Not Child Inside! Not out here in the wilds all alone!* I made my way back to the shack in irregular, staggering stages and put myself to bed. When Glory and Seth got back, I propped up wearily on one elbow and looked at them groggily, the pain having perversely quitted me just before they arrived.

"Do you suppose it is almost time? I have no way of knowing. Time is—is different here. I can't put the two times together and come out with anything. I'm afraid, Glory! I'm afraid!"

"We shoulda taken you into Kerry to the doctor a long time ago. He'd be able to tell you, less'n," she hesitated. "Less'n you *are* different, so'st he'd notice—"

I smiled weakly. "Don't tiptoe so, Glory. I won't be insulted. No, he'd notice nothing different except when birth begins. We can by-pass the awfullest of the hurting time—" I gulped and pressed my hands to the sudden emptiness that almost caved me in. "That's what I was supposed to learn from our People here!" I wailed. "I only know about it. Our first child is our learning child. You can't learn it ahead."

"Don't worry," said Glory dryly. "Child Within will manage to get outside whether your hurt or not. If you're a woman, you can bear the burden women have since Eve."

So we planned to go into town the next day and just tell the doctor I hadn't been to a doctor yet—lots of people don't, even today. But it started to rain in the night. I roused first to the soft sound of rain on the old tin roof of the kitchen—the soft sound that increased and increased until it became a drumming roar. Even that sound was music. And the vision of rain falling everywhere, everywhere, patting the dusty ground, dimpling the lake, flipping the edges of curled leaves, soothed me into sleep. I was awakened later by the sound of Seth's coughing. *That* wasn't a soothing sound. And it got worse and worse. It began to sound as though he actually were coughing up his lungs as Glory had said. He could hardly draw a breath between coughing spasms. I lay there awake in the dark, hearing Glory's murmurs and the shuff-shuff of her feet as she padded out to the kitchen and back to the bedroom. But the coughing went on and on and I began to get a little impatient. I tossed in bed, suddenly angrily restless. I had Child Within to think of. They knew I needed my rest. They weren't making any effort to be quiet— Finally I couldn't stand it any longer. I padded in my turn, to their bedroom and peered in. Seth was leaning back against the head of the iron bedstead, gasping for breath. Glory was sitting beside him, tearing up

an old pillowcase to make handkerchiefs for him. She looked up at me in the half light of the uncovered baking powder can, her face drawn and worn.

"It's bad, this time," she said. "Makin' up for lost time, I guess."

"Can't you do something to stop his coughing?" I asked. I really hadn't mean it to sound so abrupt and flat. But it did, and Glory let her hands fall slowly to her lap as her eyes fixed on me.

"Oh," she said. "Oh." Then her eyes fairly blazed and she said, "Can't you?"

"I'm not a Healer," I said, feeling almost on the defensive, "If I were, I could give—"

"You wouldn't give anybody anything," said Glory, her face closed and cold. "Less'n you wanted to show off or make yourself comfortable. Go back to bed."

I went, my cheeks burning in the dark. How dare she talk to me like that! An Outsider to one of the People! She had no right—My anger broke into tears and I cried and cried on my narrow Outsider bed in that falling-down Outsider house, but under all my anger and outrage, so closely hidden that I'd hardly admit it to myself even, was a kernel of sorrow. I'd thought Glory liked me.

Morning was grey and clammy. The rain fell steadily and the bluish light from the baking powder can was cold and uncheerful. The

day dragged itself to a watery end, nothing except a slight waning and waxing of the light outdoors to distinguish one hour from the next. Seth's coughing eased a little and by the second rain-loud morning it had finally stopped.

Seth prowled around the cramped rooms, his shoulders hunched forward, his chest caved in as though he had truly coughed out his lungs. His coughing had left him, but his breath still caught in ragged chunks.

"Set," said Glory, tugging at his sleeve. "You'll wear yourself and me out too, to-ing and fro-ing like that."

"Don't ease me none to set," said Seth hoarsely. "Leave me be. Let me move while I can. Got a hunch there won't be much moving for me after the next spell."

"Now Seth." Glory's voice was calm and a little reprimanding, but I caught her terror and grief. With a jolt I realized how exactly her feelings were mine when I had crouched beside Thann, watching him die. *But they're old and ugly and through with life!* I protested. *But they love* came the answer, *and love can never be old nor ugly nor through with life.*

"Sides, I'm worried," said Seth, wiping the haze of his breath off the newly installed window. "Rain like this'll fill every creek around here. Then watch the dam fill up. They told us we'd be living on an island before

Spring. When the lake's full, we'll be six foot under. All this rain—" He swiped at the window again, and turning away, resumed his restless pacing. "That slope between here and the highway's getting mighty touchy. Wash it out a little at the bottom and it'll all come down like a ton of bricks. Dam it up there, we'd get the full flow right across us and I ain't feeling much like a swim!" He grinned weakly and leaned against the table.

"Glory." His breathing was heavy and ragged. "Glory, I'm tired."

Glory put him to bed. I could hear the murmur of her voice punctuated at intervals by a heavy monosyllable from him.

I shivered and went to the little bandy-legged cast iron stove. Lifting one of its four lids, I peered at the smoldering pine knot inside. The heaviness outside pushed a thin acrid cloud of smoke out at me and I clattered the lid back, feeling an up-gush of exasperation at the inefficiency of Outsiders. I heated the stove up until the top glowed dull red, and reveled in the warmth.

Glory came back into the kitchen and hunched near the stove, rubbing her hands together.

"How'd you get the wood to burn?" she finally asked. "It was wet. 'S all there is left."

"I didn't," I said. "I heated the stove."

"Thanks," said Glory shortly (not even being surprised that I could do a thing like that!).

We both listened to the murmur of the rain on the roof and the pop and creak of the expanding metal of the stovepipe as the warmth reached upward.

"I'm sorry," said Glory. "I shouldn'ta spoken so short the other night, but I was worried."

"It's all right," I said magnanimously. "And when my People come—"

"Look, Debbie." Glory turned her back to the stove and clasped her hands behind her. "I'm not saying you don't have folks and that they won't come some day and set everything right, but they aren't here *now*. They can't help *now*, and we got troubles—plenty of troubles. Seth's worrying about that bank coming down and shifting the water. Well, he don't know, but it came down in the night last night and we're already almost an island. Look out the window."

I did, cold apprehension clutching at my insides. The creek had water in it. Not a trickle, but a wide, stainless-steel roadbed of water that was heavy with red silt where it escaped the color of the down-pressing clouds. I ran to the other window. A narrow hogback led through the interlacing of a thousand converging streams, off into the soggy greyness of the mountain beyond us. It was the

trail—the hilltop trail Glory and Seth took to Skagmore.

"I hate to ask it of you," said Glory. "Especially after telling you off like I did, but we gotta get outa here. We gotta save what we can and hole up at the mine. You better start praying now that it'll be a few days more before the water gets that high. Meanwhile, grab your bedroll and git goin'."

I gaped at her and then at the water outside and, running to my cot, grabbed up the limp worn bedding and started for the door.

"Hold it! Hold it!" she called. "Fold the stuff so you can manage it. Put on this old hat of Seth's. It'll keep the rain outa your eyes for a while, maybe. Wait'll I get my load made up. I'll take the lead."

*Oh no! O no!* I cried to myself as panic trembled my hands and hampered my folding the bed clothes. *Why is this happening to me? Wasn't it enough to take Thann away? Why should I have to suffer any more?*

"Ready?" Glory's intent eyes peered across her load. "Hope you've been praying. If you haven't, you better get started. We gotta make it there and back. Seth's gotta rest some before he tackles it."

"But I can lift!" I cried. "I don't have to walk! I have my shield. I don't have to get wet! I can go—"

"Go then," said Glory, her voice

hard and unfriendly. "Git goin'!"

I caught at my panic and bit my lips—I needed Glory. "I only mean I could take your load and mine, too," I said, which wasn't what I had originally meant at all. "Then you could take something else. I can transport all this stuff and keep it dry."

I lifted my own burden and hovered it while I took hers from her reluctant arms. I lifted the two together and maneuvered the load out the door, extending my personal shield to cover it all. "How—how do I get there?" My voice was little and scared.

"Follow the hogback," said Glory, her voice still unwarmed, as though she had been able to catch my hidden emotion, as The People do. "You'll see the entrance up the hill a ways soon as you top out on the ridge. Don't go too far inside. The shoring's rotted out in lots of places."

"Okay," I said. "I'll come back."

"Stay there," said Glory. "Git goin'. I gotta get Seth up." My eyes followed hers and recoiled from the little brown snake of water that had welled up in one corner of the room. I got going.

Even inside my shield, I winced away from the sudden increased roar of descending rain. I couldn't see a yard ahead and had to navigate from boulder to boulder along the hogback. It was a horrible eternity before I saw the dark gap of the mine entrance and man-

aged to get myself and my burden inside. For several feet around the low irregular arch of the entrance, the powdery ground was soggy mud, but farther back it was dry and the roof vaulted up until it was fairly spacious.

I put the bedding down and looked around me. Two narrow strips of rail disappeared back into the mine and an ore car tilted drunkenly off one side, two wheels off and half-covered with dirt on the floor beside it. I unearthed one wheel and tugging it upright, rolled it, wobbling and uncooperative, over to the stack of bedding. I started heating the wheel, making slow work of so large a task because I had done so little with the basic Signs and Persuasions—the practices of my People.

Suddenly it seemed to me a long time since I'd left the shack. I ran to the entrance and peered out. No Glory or Seth! Where could they be! I couldn't be all alone here with no one around to help me! I swished out into the storm so fast my face was splattered with rain before my shielding was complete. Time and again I almost lost the hogback. It was an irregular chain of rocky little islands back towards the shack. I groped through the downpour, panting to Child Within, *Oh wait! Oh wait! You can't come now!* And tried to ignore a vague, growing discomfort.

Then the miracle happened!

High above me I heard the eggbeater whirr of a helicopter! Rescue! Now all this mad rush and terror and discomfort would be over. All I had to do was signal the craft and make them take me aboard and take me somewhere away—I turned to locate it and signal it to me when I suddenly realized that I couldn't lift to it—I *couldn't* lift around Outsiders who would matter. This basic rule of The People was too deeply engrained in me. Hastily I dipped down until I perched precariously on one of the still-exposed boulders of the trail. I waved wildly up at the slow swinging 'copter. They had to see me! "Here I am! Here I am!" I cried, my voice too choked even to carry a yard. "Help me! Help me!" And, in despair as the 'copter slanted away into the grey falling rain, I slid past vocal calling into subvocal and spread my call over the whole band, praying that a receptor somewhere would pick up my message. "There's need!" I sobbed out the old childish distress cry of the Group. "There's need!"

*And an answer came!*

"One of us?" The thought came startled. "Who are you? Where are you?"

"I'm down here in the rain!" I sobbed, aloud as well as silently. "I'm Debbie! I used to live in the Canyon! We went to the Home. Come and get me! Oh, come and get me!"



"I'm coming," came the answer. "What on Earth are you doing on Earth, Debbie? No one was supposed to return so lightly—"

"So lightly!" Shattered laughter jabbed at my throat. All the time I'd spent on Earth already had erased itself, and I was caught up by the poignancy of this moment of meeting with Thann not here—this watery welcome to Earth with no welcome for Thann. "Who are you?" I asked. I had forgotten individual thought patterns so soon.

"I'm Jemmy," came the reply. "I'm with an Outsider Disaster Unit. We've got our hands full fishing people out of this damned lake!" He chuckled. "Serves them right for damming Cougar Creek and spoiling the Canyon. But tell me, what's the deal? You shouldn't be here. You went back to the Home, didn't you?"

"The Home—" I burst into tears and all the rest of the time that the 'copter circled back and found a settling-down space on a flat already awash with two inches of water, Jemmy and I talked. Mostly I did the talking. We shifted out of verbalization and our thoughts speeded up until I had told Jemmy everything that had happened to me since that awful crashing day. It was telling of someone else—some other far, sad story of tragedy and graceless destitution—Outsider makeshifts.

I had just finished when the 'copter door swung open and Jemmy stepped out to hover above the water that was sucking my sneakers off the slant of the boulder I was crouched on.

"Oh, thanks be to The Power," I cried, grabbing for Jemmy's hands, but stubbing my own on my personal shield. "Oh take me out of this, Jemmy! Take me back to The People! I'm so sick of living like an Outsider! And Child Within doesn't want to be born on a dirt floor in a mine! Oh Jemmy! How horrible to be an Outsider! You came just in time!" Tears of thankfulness wet my face as I tried to smile at him.

"Debbie!"

Surely that couldn't be my name! That cold, hard, accusing word! That epithet—that—

"Jemmy!" I collapsed my shield and reached for him. Unbelievably, he would not receive me. "Jemmy!" I cried, the rain wetting my lips. "What's the matter? What's wrong?"

He floated back so I couldn't reach him. "Where are Glory and Seth?" he asked sternly.

"Glory and Seth?" I had to think before I could remember them. They were another life ago. "Why back at the cabin, I guess." I was bewildered. "Why?"

"You have no concern of them?" he asked. "You ask for rescue and forget them? What did The Home do to you? You're ap-

parently not one of Us any more. If you've been infected with some sort of virus, we want no spreading of it."

"You don't want me?" I was dazed. "You're going to leave me here! But—but you can't! You've got to take me!"

"You're not drowning," he said coldly. "Go back to the cave. I have a couple of blankets in the 'copter I can spare. Be comfortable. I have other people who need rescue worse."

"But Jemmy! I don't understand. What's wrong? What have I done?" My heart was shattering and cutting me to pieces with its razor sharp edges.

He looked at me coldly and speculatively. "If you have to ask, it'd take too long to explain," he said. He turned away and took the blankets from the 'copter. He aimed them at the mine entrance and, hovering them, gave them a shove to carry them through into the mine.

"There," he said, "Curl up in your comfort. Don't get your feet wet."

"Oh Jemmy, don't leave me! Help me!" I was in a state of almost complete collapse, darkness roaring over me.

"While you're curled up, all nice and safe," Jemmy's voice came back to me from the 'copter, "you might try thinking a little on 'Just who on Earth do you think you are! And if you think you

have the answer to that, try, 'I was hungry—' "

I didn't hear him go. I sat hunched in my sodden misery, too far gone even to try to puzzle it all out. All my hopes had been built on when my People would find me. They'd set everything right. I would be freed from all my worry and hardships—and now—and now . . .

A wave of discomfort that had been building up slowly for some time, suddenly surged over me and my fingers whitened as I clutched the rock. How could I have mistaken that other pain for this? "Glory!" I whimpered. "It's Child Within!" Now I could remember Glory and Seth. I was back in the miserable half-life of waiting for my People. I scrambled to my feet and closed my shield, setting it to warmth to counteract the chill that struck to my bones. "I can't face it alone! Anything, anything is better than being alone!"

I streaked back along the hog-back that had almost disappeared under the creeping muddy tide. The cabin was in a lake. The back door was ajar. The whole thing tilted slightly off true as though it were thinking of taking off into the roar of the incredible river that swept the creek bed from bank to bank. I staggered against the door as another hard surge of anguish tightened my hands and wrung an involuntary cry from me.

When it subsided, I wiped the sweat from my upper lip and pushed the door farther open. I stepped into the magnified roaring of the rain on the roof. Blue light was flooding serenely from the baking-powder can on the table in the empty kitchen. I snatched it up and ran to the bedroom.

Seth lay white and unmoving on his bed, his eyes sunken, his chest still. I pressed the back of my clenched hand hard against my mouth, feeling the bruise of my teeth. "Oh, no!" I whispered, and gasped with relief as a quick shallow breath lifted the one thin quilt Glory had left him from the bundle of bedding.

"You came back."

My eyes flew to Glory. She sat on the other side of the bed, a shoebox in her lap, one hand clutching a corner of the battered old quilt.

"You didn't come," I whispered. "I waited."

"No need to whisper." Her voice was quite as usual except for a betraying catch on the last word. "He can't hear you."

"But you must come!" I cried. "The house will go in a minute. The creek's already—"

"Why should I come," she asked without emphasis. "He can't come."

We both watched another of the shaken breaths come and go.

"But you'll be washed away—"

"So'll you if you don't git goin.'"

She turned her face away from me.

"But Glory—" Her name came but twisted—a muffled cry of pain. I clenched both hands on the door jamb and clung until the anguish subsided.

"Child Within," said Glory—her eyes intent on me.

"Yes," I gasped. "I guess so."

Glory stood up and laid the shoebox on the corner of the sagging dresser. She leaned over and smoothed the covers under Seth's chin. "I'll be back," she told him. She waded through the ruffle of water that covered the floor ankle deep, and rounded the bed.

"We better go," she said. "You'll have to point me the way. The trail's gone—"

"You mean you'd leave him here alone!" I was stunned. "Your own husband!"

She looked back at Seth and her lips tightened. "We all die alone, anyway," she said. "He'd tell me to go, if'n he could."

Then I was still as I caught the passionate outpouring of her grief and love—her last, unspoken farewell to Seth. With an effort she turned her eyes back to me. "Our duty's to the living," she said. "And Child Within won't wait."

"Oh, Glory!" Anguish of sorrow filled my chest till I could only gasp again. "Oh, Glory! We can't, we can't!" My throat ached and I blinked against tears of quite a different sort than those I'd been shedding since Thann died.

I snatched the glowing nickel out of the baking powder can and shoved it into my pocket. "Tuck him in good," I said, nodding at Seth. "Bring whatever you need."

Glory looked at me briefly, hope flaring in her eyes, then, with hasty shaken hands, she tucked the covers tight around Seth and, grabbing up her shoe-box, she pushed it under the covers next to him. There was a grating grind and the whole shack swung a quarter circle around.

"Can we get the bed through the doors?" I asked shrilly.

"Not unless we take it apart," said Glory, the quietness of her voice steadying me, "And there isn't time."

"Then—then—"

"The mattress will bend," she said. "If both of us—"

With all my faith and power I withdrew into the Quiet within me. *Help me now, I prayed. I can do nothing of myself. Strengthen me, guide me, help me—*

The last words came audibly as I clutched the foot of the bed, waiting until the wave subsided. Then, slowly, deliberately, quietly and unhurried, I lifted the mattress. Seth lay on and bent its edges enough to get it out of the bedroom. I hovered it in the kitchen. Glory and I both staggered as the house swayed underfoot—swayed and steadied.

"Have you something to put over him to keep the rain off?" I

asked. "I can't extend my shield that far and lift that much at the same time."

"Our slickers," said Glory, her eyes intent on me with that different look in them. "They'll help a little."

"Get them then," I said, "And you'll have to get on the mattress, too, to keep him covered."

"But can you—" Glory began.

"I will," I said, holding my Quietness carefully in my mind. "Hurry—the house is going."

Hastily, Glory snatched the two yellow slickers from the nails behind the front door. She scrambled into one and spread the other over Seth. "His head, too," I said, "or he'll nearly drown. You'd better cover your head, too. It'll be easier to take. Hurry! Hurry!"

Glory gave one look at the hovering mattress and, setting her lips grimly, crawled on and lay beside Seth, one arm protectively across his chest. She'd hardly closed her eyes before I started the mattress out the door. The house began spinning at the same time. By the time we got outside, it had turned completely around and, as we left it, it toppled slowly into the creek and was lost in the tumult of the waters.

*It's no more than the windows and siding, I whispered to myself. In fact, it's less because there's no glass to break.* But all my frantic reassurances didn't help much. There were still two lives hanging

on my ability to do the inanimate lift and transport them. Doggedly I pushed on, hardly able to see beyond the cascade of rain that arched down my shield. Below me the waters were quieting because they were getting so deep that they no longer quarreled with the boulders and ridges. They smothered them to silence. Ahead and a little below me, rain ran from Glory and Seth's slickers, and the bed, other than where they lay, was a sodden mess.

Finally I could see the entrance of the mine, a darker blot in the pervading greyness. "There it is, Glory!" I cried. "We're almost there. Just a little—" And the pain seized me. Gasping, I felt myself begin to fall. All my power was draining out thinly—my mind had only room for the all-enveloping anguish. I felt the soggy end of the mattress under one arm, and then two strong hands grabbed me and began to tug me onto the bed.

"Try—" Glory's voice was almost too far away. "Help yourself! Onto the bed! Help yourself!"

Deliberately I pushed all thought of pain aside. As though in slow motion I felt myself lift slightly and slide onto the end of the bed. I lay half on, half off and tried to catch my breath.

"Debbie," Glory's voice came calmly and deliberately. "We're almost in the water. Can you lift us up a little?"

*Ok no, I thought. It's too much to ask! Let me rest.*

Then for no reason at all I heard Jemmy's voice again. "Where's Glory and Seth?" as though in some way I were responsible. *I am!* I cried to myself. *I am responsible for them. I took their lives in my hands when we left the bedroom. Even before that! I made myself responsible for them when they took me in—*

With infinite effort I pushed myself into the background and reached out again to lay hold on The Power and, slowly, the bed rose from the lapping of the waters and, slowly, it started again towards the mine entrance and I held Glory's hand in such a bruising grasp you would have thought I was birthing something or someone out there in the pelting rain.

The events of the next few minutes ran hurriedly and clear, but as far removed from me as though I were watching everything through the wrong end of binoculars. I settled the mattress near the glowing wheel. Glory was off in unflurried haste. She spread my bedclothes and got me undressed by the light of the nickel she had propped up on a ledge on the wall. I cried out when I felt the warmth of my *tekla* nightgown gliding over my head. I'd forgotten the clothes for Child Within! The muddy waters were tumbling all their softness and smallness now.

Another pain came and when it subsided, Glory had brought a coffee pot from somewhere—one of those huge enameled camp pots and had filled it from somewhere and put it on the wheel-stove to heat. The cases were gone from our pillows and they lay beside my bed torn into neat squares in a little heap, topped by a battered old jackknife with one sharp blade open. One of the thin blankets had been ripped in four.

Glory's face appeared over me, rugged, comforting. "We're doin' fine," she said. "Me and Seth had a few things stashed here in the mine. Seth's breathing better. You got nothing to worry about now 'ceptin' Child Within. Nothing to worry about there neither 'ceptin' what you'll name him now that he won't be within anymore."

"Oh, Glory!" I whispered and turned my cheek to press against her hand.

From there on, I was three people—one who cried out and gasped and struggled with the pain and against the pain and was bound up in the blindness of complete concentration on the task at hand, and an accusing one—one sitting in judgment. And the third me was standing before the bar of that judgment, defenseless and guilty.

The indictment was read from the big Book.

"I was hungry," came the accusation, "and they fed me."

"I ate their food," I admitted. "Unearned—"

"I was naked and they clothed me—"

"'Now we can have decent clothes,'" I heard myself saying again.

"I was a stranger and they took me in—"

"I condescended to let them care for me," I admitted.

"I was in the prison of my grief and they visited me."

"And I accepted their concern and care of me as an unquestioned right. I took and took and took and gave nothing—" Remorse was sharper than the pain that made the other cry out and struggle on the thin bedclothes.

*Think no more highly of yourself than you should.* The voice had stopped. Now the words ran in ribbons of flames, wavering before my closed eyes, searing the tears dry.

*To whom much is given, much is expected. Who would be first must be last. Who would be greatest must be the servant of all.*

*Whatsoever you do unto the least of these —*

Then suddenly the separation was over and the three of me coalesced in a quick blind rush and I listened blissfully to the lusty, outraged cry of My Child.

"Oh, Thann!" I whispered as I slid into a cloud of comfort and relaxation. "Oh, Thann, he's here. Our child—our Thann-too."

"You're mighty sure, aren't you?" Glory's voice was amused. "But you're right. He's a boy."

I pushed sleep away from me a little to fret, "Let me see my poor naked baby. All his little clothes—"

"Not so naked," said Glory. "Here, hold him while I get things squared around." She laid the blanket-wrapped bundle beside me and I lifted up on one elbow to look down into the miracle of the face of my child. I brushed my forefinger across the dark feather-down of his damp hair and lost myself in the realization that here was Child Within. This was what had been Becoming, serenely untouched, within me during all the tumultuous things that had happened. I protested from my half sleep when Glory came back for my child.

"Just going to dress him," said Glory. "You can have him back."

"Dress him?" I asked fuzzily.

"Yes," said Glory, unwrapping the blanket. "I had that sugar sack gown in my shoebox and them old pillow cases make pretty soft diapers. Not very wet-proof though, I'm afraid."

"A boy?" It was Seth's voice, shaken but clear—his first words since the cabin.

"A boy!" Glory's voice was a hymn of thankfulness. "Want to see him?"

"Sure. Us men gotta stick together!"

I lay and smiled to keep from crying as I heard their murmuring over my child.

"Dark like Davy," Glory finally said softly. "Well, better give him back, I guess." She laid him beside me.

"Glory," I said, "the gown could have been for Davy's child. So you and Seth must be grand parents for my Thann-too."

"I—" Glory bit her lips and smoothed his blanket with a trembling hand. "We—" She swallowed hard. "Sure. It's a pleasure."

"Hey, Grandma," called Seth, hardly above a whisper. "I could do with some coffee!"

"Okay, Grampa, keep your shirt on," said Glory. "One coffee coming up!"

That night after Glory had got us all settled and the nickel light was tucked under a rusty tin can and sleep was flowing warmly around us all, I roused a little and leaned up on one elbow, instinctively curving myself around the precious bundle of my child. The wheel stove glowed on, taking a little of the raw chill off the rocky room. Glory and Seth were sleeping on the other side of the wheel, their bedding augmented by one of the blankets Jemmy had left. When I told Glory where they were, but not where they came from, she got them and, looking at me over the folded bulk of



them, opened her mouth, closed it again and silently spread one blanket for me and one for them. Now they were both asleep and I was awake listening to the 'voice of many waters, praising—' and added my praise to theirs. Outside, the sky was clearing, but the murmuring lap of the waters reminded that the numberless creeks in the hills had not yet emptied themselves and the tide was rising higher.

I turned over in my mind the odd duality of events of the night. I heard and saw again all the accusations, all the admonitions. They must have all been waiting for just such a chance when the Distorted Me wasn't watching, to break through and confront me with myself. I had known all the words before. Their pertinent wisdom had been familiar to The People before they ever arrived on Earth and it was one of the endearing things of Earth that we had there found such beautifully rhythmic paraphrases of them.

As I had laid down the burden of Child Within only to assume the greater burden of Thann-too, so also must I lay down the burden of my spoiled-brat self and take up the greater burden of my responsibility as one of The People towards Glory and Seth and whatever the Power sent into my life. Jemmy had been right. I *wasn't* of The People. I had myself more of an Outsider than an Out-

sider, even. Well, remorse is useless except insofar as it changes your way of doing things. And change I would—the Power being my helper.

Then I closed my eyes and felt them begin to dampen a little, as I wondered wistfully how long it would be before Jemmy would come again. Thann-too stirred in the curve of my arm. I looked down into the shadow that held him. "But I do think Jemmy was unnecessarily hard on Child Within!" I whispered as I gathered the warm little life closer.

"I do, too," came a voice—subvocally.

Startled, I glanced up. There were two of them standing in the cave entrance.

"And I told him so, too." The figures moved in, quiet inches above the crunch of the mine floor. "Remember me, Debbie? It's Valancy. Maybe you've forgotten—"

"Forgotten? Oh Valancy!" And we were hugging each other tightly. There was a lovely, warm intermingling of thoughts among the three of us, and all sorts of explanations—Jemmy had had no idea Child Within was so nearly ready to be born—and apologies—"If I'd had *any* idea, but when you—" and acceptances and reasons why and such things as Necessary Patterns— 'Since you had the situation in hand I went to see if someone else—" until

finally, chastened and relaxed, I watched Valancy cuddling my child.

How could I ever have forgotten Jemmy and Valancy—the glamorous Grown-ups—the Old Ones of the Group of my People in Cougar Canyon, when the Canyon was still habitable. We had all waved them goodbye when our ship left for the Home so long ago.

"You can look," said Valancy to Jemmy. "But don't touch." Then she contradicted herself by putting the sleeping bundle into his arms. She snapped her fingers and a small bundle floated in from the mine entrance.

"I brought some clothes," she said. "Though it looks as if Glory has things well in hand. But here are some of Our Child's clothes. She grew so fast that she hardly got to use some of them. If we don't tell him, Thann-too will never know he had to wear girl-type clothes." She unfolded the torn blanket square from around the baby. "And there's the gown," she said, smiling, fingering the hem of it, now regrettably damp.

"There's the gown," I said. "Oh, Valancy, wasn't I the luckiest person in the whole world to have Glory with me? I didn't deserve it a bit! What a mess I was!"

"The Glorys of this world have to put up with a lot of messes," said Valancy, deftly changing my

child from the skin out, and bundling him, still blissfully sleeping, back into my arms. She folded the wet clothes and bundled them up.

"We're taking you and the child back with us," said Jemmy. "We'd better wake Glory and tell her."

"Glory!" I called softly and audibly.

Instantly she was awake and out of bed, blinking in the dimness. "Glory, my People have come," I said. "They want to take me and Thann-too back with them. But I'll be back, just as soon as I can."

Valancy surrendered the baby into Glory's waiting arms. She held him close. "I reckon you do have to go," she said, her voice muffled against his blanket. "He's going to be needing diapers by the dozen pretty darn soon. It'd keep us hopping, washing out what we have."

"We brought some supplies for you," said Jemmy. "They're from the disaster unit. We're working all around this area helping people who got flooded out."

"Is Jicker all right?" Seth's voice came huskily.

"Jicker?" Jemmy did some fast scanning— "Oh, yes," chuckled Jemmy. "I remember him. We fished him off the roof of his cabin. Never heard such cussing in all my life. Ten minutes solid without repeating himself once!"

"That's Jicker," grinned Seth and settled back down. "I'm glad the old cuss is okay."

Jemmy was looking around the shadowy room. "This is the Skagmore, isn't it?" he said. "I thought she was played out a long time ago."

"She was—a couple of times," said Seth. "But we managed to find a few more pockets. Enough to keep us going for a while, but I reckon she's about done for now, with all this water and stuff."

"We had a mine on the other side of Baldy," said Jemmy. "When we moved on up into the hills we didn't think there was enough left to make it worthwhile to leave a crew behind. I think there's pretty good pickin's there for a couple of willing workers. A sort of shack's there, too, where the fellows bunked when it was their shift. I think we piped the spring into the kitchen the last summer. It's not bad. As soon as we get Debbie settled at home, we'll come back and take you there. You can look the set-up over and see if you'd like to take a whack at it."

"Thanks," said Glory huskily. "We'll give her a look. We're kinda wiped out here. This is it." She gestured at the few possessions huddled around the glowing wheel.

"And only the clothes they stand in," I added. "And Glory's treasure box. I lifted the shoebox

from the edge of Seth's bed and floated it to Glory's hands. "Glory," I said on sudden impulse. "Do you have your mirror in there?"

"The pieces." Glory's face reddened slightly. "Silly, keeping useless things."

"Show it to them," I asked. "They know I broke it."

Slowly Glory took the lid off the box and carefully lifted out the mirror. She had fitted all the broken pieces together and they caught and cut into pieces what little light there was in the cave. I took the mirror from her and looked into it at my shattered, shamed face. "Jemmy," I said, holding it out to him. "I broke it. I ruined something I can't make right. Can you help me?"

Jemmy took the mirror and stared down into it, his face tight with concentration. After long seconds, there was a sudden liquid flow of light and the broken pieces of glass melted into one another and glazed across. He gave the mirror back to me and I saw myself mended and whole again.

"Here, Glory," I said, putting it into her hands. "It's only a part of all the apologies and makings-up for what I owe you."

She ran her finger across the mended glass, her face tender with memories.

"Thanks," she said. "I appreciate it."

Jemmy was bringing in a carry-

case for me so I wouldn't have to exert myself at all on the return trip. Glory held Thann-too while Valancy and Jemmy got me settled. She fingered the soft warmth of the baby blanket and burrowed in to uncover one of the tiny pink hands. She tucked it back gently, folding the cuff of the gown around it first.

"Where's the other stuff?" she asked. "No sense taking make-shifts back with you."

"No," I said. "You can't have the gown back, even if you *do* want to keep it. That's Thann-too's very first gown, and might have been his only gown if things hadn't worked out as they did. It's staying in our family, every thoughtful stitch of it, and Thann-too's first child will wear it—" I broke off, overwhelmed by a sudden thought. "Oh, Valancy! I'm a *mother*! And when Thann-too grows up, I'll be a *grandmother*!"

They all laughed at my shocked astonishment. And the emotional temperature of our parting eased.

When Jemmy and Valancy were ready to transport me out into a sky aglow with moonlight and puffy left-over clouds, Glory knelt to surrender my baby into my arms. I reached up and hugged her fiercely to me. "You're Thann-too's grandma, and don't you forget it," I whispered. "I'll be back. We'll both be back, and make

everything as right as we can after such a horrible beginning. Honestly, all The People aren't as bad as I make them seem. Don't judge them by me."

"Your folks seem to be mighty nice." Glory was ignoring the tears that stood in her eyes. "I—I never minded you too much. Kids will be kids and then there was Child Within—" Her finger touched his sleeping cheek and she stood up abruptly. "Lordee! Here I am in my night clothes in front of ever' body!" And she retreated into the shadows to find her slicker to use for a robe.

I waved goodbye once as we launched out over the waters. Glory's arm went up in brief salute and she turned back into the darkness without waiting to see us gone.

"You certainly lucked out there, didn't you?" said Jemmy from behind me.

"Didn't I?" I murmured drowsily. "I didn't expect an angel in jeans and plaid shirt. That's not an excuse. It's an explanation."

Jemmy chuckled and in silence we streaked across the sky. I closed my eyes against the brightness of the moon. Swallowing sorrow and hugging my child close against me, I whispered, "Oh Thann—oh Thann—oh Thann!"

And felt him very near.



*Fulton was reasonably sure that he had not really meant to kill Ledyard, and that the fall was an accident. At the same time, Fulton knew now that he was capable of murder, and that his thoughts of violence were not idle.*

## THE BEETLE

by Jay Williams

FULTON SAT ALONE IN THE LIVING room listening to the noises of the house. There was a faint clink as ice melted in his glass, the whirr of the refrigerator in the kitchen, the humming of the pump in the cellar, the low crack of an expanding board. Now and then something banged against the window screens, a night-flying June bug perhaps. It was a hot night and the sweat ran down Fulton's face although he wasn't moving. He was thinking about Ledyard again, not with remorse but simply because whenever he was alone he could not get the man out of his mind.

Upstairs, Ellis called, "I want a drink of water, Donald."

Fulton ignored him, except to let himself think, in passing, that the boy had never learned to call him "Daddy" although he had been married to Eliza for two years.

He sipped his drink. Ledyard, he thought. I'll bet the kid would-

've called *him* Daddy. The kid had liked Ledyard. Too bad about Ledyard. But it had been suicide; nobody had questioned that. And the better man had won.

He remembered that night. He and Ledyard on the balcony in Ledyard's apartment. He had said, "Get wise to yourself, Ledyard. Just stay away from Eliza."

Ledyard had said, "Don't push me, Fulton," but there had been no menace in his voice, no aggressiveness. It was mild, like the rest of him, soft, small, with mild eyes behind large spectacles. He was as inoffensive and helpless, Fulton thought, as a worm or a bug under one's foot—and as repulsive, too. Perhaps it was that which made him hate the man so, almost unreasonably, for Fulton was a strong man and hated all things that crept and crawled.

Fulton had said, "Well, just get it through your head. She's my type. Don't bust in, that's all."

That had been unfair, considering that Ledyard had known Eliza for years. He had seen her through her divorce, had even taken Ellis, then two years old, to live with him during the moving. He had always loved Eliza; he had hoped to marry her, until Fulton, the better man, the stronger man, had come along.

To emphasize what he said, Fulton had pushed him again, harder this time. Ledyard had staggered back and hit the low railing. It had happened quickly, unexpectedly. Suddenly Fulton had seen Ledyard's wide eyes behind the glasses, and wide open mouth like a square, both reversed, his legs in the air, and then he was gone. Irrevocably gone.

Fulton shook himself, but he could not rid himself of the memory. There had been a scream, too. Or had there? No, no scream, that was what made it so bad. It had been soundless with the sense of falling, like a dream. He had run to the railing and looked, and two or three people had gathered around, far below, so that it looked like ants around a dead bug. He had gotten out of Ledyard's apartment, and walked all the way down stairs. It didn't take much to lose yourself in a crowd. Nobody knew him, no one had seen him. And everyone had agreed that Ledyard had killed himself because of Fulton and Eliza.

Ellis called again, chanting monotonously, "Dri-i-ink a wa-a-ater."

"Damn brat," Fulton said, without emotion, without moving. If Eliza were out of the way he could get rid of the boy. Send him to a school. Best thing in the world for him. Make a man of him.

It was not the first time he had gone from thoughts of Ledyard's death to thoughts of his wife's death. It had not been a happy marriage; he had been somewhat more attracted to her money than to her pale beauty, for Fulton was, as he expressed it, a man who liked to live high but not dry, and who had no patience with sitting around a house in Connecticut every evening and looking at the pictures on the walls. There was the boy, too. Ellis had never liked him, although for a few weeks Fulton had put himself out to be pleasant and fatherly. "That's how it is," he thought to himself, "you knock yourself out trying to be nice to people and they kick you in the teeth."

Not that it would be difficult to get rid of Eliza. He did not think of himself as a murderer, not any more than any man does, and even the happiest of men sometimes finds himself contemplating methods of doing away with his wife. But he knew, in an inner, secret core that he was capable of it; he had been hardened by Ledyard's death. Sometimes, thinking about

that smaller man, he was able to make himself believe that he had deliberately pushed the man to his death. Indeed, when he was not touched by the vertigo that came with remembering the fall, he felt a little proud; there were not many people who had done in a rival and gotten away with it.

Utterly capable of it . . . of something clever in which his hand would not show. That was the trouble, he must run no risk. Then the house, the stocks, the cars, the property would be his for the taking. He thought of cunningly elaborate devices, of wiring a bomb into the engine of her car, of high-tension cables mysteriously parting, of falls down long flights of stairs.

He took another drink, and suddenly he sat upright, full of a new idea. It might be very easy, much easier than any of those notions. She was out tonight at one of her customary civic duties, the P.T.A. or the League of Women Voters, or one of those crackpot things he had never suspected her of liking when he had first known her . . . but that was how it was with these pale, tall women—they quickly become exhausted with pleasure and made up for it by trying to take the place of men. He grinned mirthlessly, and went back to his idea. She might fall in with some teen-age thug on the way home, or with a mugger; the papers were full of stories of women who were

attacked, raped, and killed in deserted places. He could, for instance, slip out of the house and meet her at the cross road near Cowbridge Lane. It was quiet there, quiet and lonely and wooded, not a house in sight. She would see him and stop the car, unsuspecting, thinking maybe that something was wrong with Ellis. Then, at about one o'clock he could call the police: "Have you had any reports of accidents? You see, my wife hasn't come home yet and I'm a little worried," he could say. But he would have to remember to wear gloves.

Ellis yelled, "Donald! I'm awful thirsty, Donald!"

"Shut up!" Fulton said. He could never do anything while the kid was awake. His pulse began to hammer, he felt a surge of choking anger and of excitement, as well, in his throat. "I'll bring you some water," he shouted, menacingly.

He went into the kitchen and got a glass and filled it, not bothering to let the water run, so that it was luke-warm. He climbed the stairs, taking some satisfaction in tramping as heavily as he could. Ellis's room was always cluttered with toys that he had forgotten to put away, and his boxes, and paint sets, and automobiles, and animals overflowed into the hall, and there was a fire-engine loaded with marbles and blocks at the head of the stairs. Fulton savagely kicked the thing aside and went

into the bedroom. He tripped on a corner of the rug which Ellis had turned up for a secret hiding place, and staggered. A blot of water jerked from the glass and spilled on his shoes.

"Now see what you made me do," he snarled.

The boy was sitting up in bed. He said, "Where's my mummy?"

"She's out," said Fulton. "You know she's out. Drink this damn water and go to sleep. You hear me?"

Ellis drank, looking at him over the rim of the glass. "Are you my father?" he said.

"Shut up," said Fulton. "And tomorrow I want you to pick up these toys. You hear?" He tapped with his toe at some marbles on the floor. "Somebody'll trip over them. Maybe it'll be you and you'll break your neck. Serve you right, too."

One of the marbles detached itself and moved away. It was a beetle of some sort. Fulton did not know of what sort, nor did he think of that; he stamped down at the thing automatically. It had run along the baseboard, however, where his shoe could not touch it. It darted into the hall.

"A bug," Ellis said. "That was a bug."

"You shut up and go to sleep."

Fulton got one of the child's building blocks, a flat one about two feet long and an inch thick. Without turning off the light he stepped into the hall. There was a

pale tan carpet running the length of the hall, and on it he saw the beetle. He raised the block and at the same moment the insect lifted its wing-cases and with a buzz flew towards him. Involuntarily, he ducked his head. The beetle vanished.

He hesitated, searching about for the thing. The fact that it had made him dodge he counted as its victory; it made him hate the creature. "No damn bug," he said to himself, "is going to make me jump."

He thought he heard it buzz again, in his bedroom at the end of the hall. He went to the door and listened. Something certainly went "tick!" inside, as if the insect had knocked against a lamp shade. He reached inside and snapped on the light. At that, the beetle rose from his trousers where it had been clinging all the while, and flew at the light. It closed its wing-cases again and fell to the floor. He saw it scuttle under the bureau.

Fulton wiped his face with his sleeve. Keeping his eye on the bureau, he took a newspaper from the magazine rack beside the chair and rolled it up tightly. With that in one hand and the block in the other, he got down on hands and knees and peered under the bureau. He swished the rolled paper back and forth, holding the block ready. It seemed to him that he felt something, and he jammed the newspaper in hard against the



wall, grinding it around until it split and broke. He withdrew it and bent down to look. Something tickled his hand. He glanced sideways. The beetle had run out over his hand, across his wrist, and was making for the door of the bathroom.

Quivering with fury and revulsion, Fulton sprang up and hurled the block at it. It changed direction and vanished under the bed.

He wiped his hand on his trousers. He got the flashlight from the drawer of the night table. He said, "No you don't. Oh, no, Buster," biting his lower lip. He took the broken roll of newspaper and stuffed it in the crack under the bathroom door. "You won't get away in there," he said. He picked up the block again and got on his knees; sweeping the beam back and forth he searched beneath the bed. He could see nothing but curls of dust.

Then he noticed that the baseboard, where it ran along the wall under the bed, was raised a trifle from the floor and he fancied he saw in that minute space, as in a cave, the glint of tiny eyes.

It was obvious that he could not reach it with the block. He thought for a moment, and then he said, "I'll fix you. Wait right there a minute. Don't go away." That amused him, and he chuckled. Getting to his feet, he found a long sharp nail file on the dresser and went back to the bed. He lay

down flat and crawled under a little way. Holding the flashlight with one hand he stabbed the nail file into the crack. A kind of vicious frenzy seized him; he gutted the crack, slashing the file back and forth. Dust flew out and made him sneeze.

He wriggled backwards and stood up. "Good-bye, bug," he said. He went into the bathroom and washed his hands. His face was red, and his shirt stuck to his body; his hair was full of wisps of fluff. "God," he said to his reflection, "how about that? Chasing a bug. Reminded me of Ledyard, didn't it? Same bug-eyes. Do beetles wear glasses?"

He laughed again, and came out of the bathroom. Cataclysmically, the beetle sprang up from the bedspread and flew out of the room.

Fulton snatched up the block. He rushed into the hall. He spied the thing resting on the rug near the other end, and ran, and struck at it. It scurried along the floor, its antennae quivering. It made for the guest room. Fulton tried to hit it but missed, and it disappeared into the shadows of the room.

"You won't make out in there, Ledyard," Fulton said, without thinking, and only when he heard the sound of his own words, realized what he had said.

"Of course," he said, standing in the dim hall, swinging the block, staring into the dark guest-room. "It's Ledyard. He's wise to me. He

was always a wise guy." Curiously, he felt like giggling. He put his hand out and felt cautiously along the wall of the guest room until he found the light switch. "Okay, Ledyard," he said, snapping it on. "Okay. You want to play games, eh? Just wait."

He edged into the room and stood in the corner, looking. He muttered, "A damned beetle. How about that? Eh? How about it?"

The beetle was clinging to the wall at the level of his shoulder. It was a handsome insect, nearly two inches long, with a glossy brown-blue back and long jointed antennae. He could see one eye clearly, a round lustrous black bead that seemed to regard him over a shoulder, as it were; he fancied the thing was grinning at him. He raised the block slowly, and slowly brought it forward. No hurrying, this time. It would crunch.

But before he could touch it, the beetle dropped off the wall. It darted to the rug and stopped. Fulton swung round to look for it, and suddenly he had the feeling that it was he who had been backed into a corner, that the beetle was chasing him.

He sprang forward, stamping his foot down. He was too late again. It was gone. He could hear a scratching sound somewhere, but he could see nothing.

The block was a poor weapon, it was too unwieldy. He dropped

it, deciding to rely on his feet or even his fists, although the thought of touching the thing filled him with loathing. He began to stoop, to look under the bed, and saw, with no more than a corner of his eye, what appeared to be a faint black shadow whisk out of the room. He flung open the door. He began advancing up the hall very deliberately, inspecting every foot.

He came to the stairs and stopped. With his toe, he carefully moved a couple of comic books, and rolled the toy fire-engine aside. He grunted, straightening; his back hurt, for he had been going along half stooped. Then he saw it again.

It was perched on the top step, quietly regarding him, its antennae motionless. He took a single long step and this time trod heavily on it.

It was one of Ellis's marbles.

His foot shot out from under him. He grabbed for the bannister, missed, and pitched down the stairs. His head came against the steps with a solid crack, and when he got to the bottom he lay for quite a while making a hoarse sound, and then he died.

The beetle flew down from the ceiling and fastidiously, like a man buttoning his coat, tucked its wings under their cases. It ran along the floor back into Ellis's room. The boy was still sitting up in bed, the light on, listening to all the noise.

"Hello, Mr. Ledyard," he said.

*The first round-trip tickets to Saturn averaged seven and a half million dollars apiece, but the view out there is truly superb. . . .*

# SATURN RISING

*by Arthur C. Clarke*

YES, THAT'S PERFECTLY TRUE. I met Morris Perlman when I was about twenty-eight. I met thousands of people in those days, from Presidents downwards.

When we got back from Saturn, everybody wanted to see us, and about half the crew took off on lecture tours. I've always enjoyed talking (don't say you haven't noticed it) but some of my colleagues said they'd rather go to Pluto than face another audience. Some of them did.

My beat was the mid-west, and the first time I ran into Mr. Perlman—no one ever called him anything else, certainly never 'Morris'—was in Chicago. The Agency always booked me into good, but not too luxurious, hotels. That suited me; I liked to stay in places where I could come and go as I pleased without running a gauntlet of liveried flunkies, and where I could wear anything with-in reason without being made to feel a tramp. I see you're grinning;

well, I was only a kid then, and a lot of things have changed. . . .

It's all a long time ago now, but I must have been lecturing at the University. At any rate, I remember being disappointed because they couldn't show me the place where Fermi started the first atomic pile—they said that the building had been pulled down forty years before, and there was only a plaque to mark the spot. I stood looking at it for a while, thinking of all that had happened since that far-off day in 1942. I'd been born, for one thing; and atomic power had taken me out to Saturn and back. *That* was probably something that Fermi and Co. never thought of, when they built their primitive lattice-work of uranium and graphite.

I was having breakfast in the Coffee Shop when a slightly-built, middle-aged man dropped into the seat on the other side of the table. He nodded a polite 'Good morning,' then gave a start of surprise as

he recognised me. (Of course, he'd planned the encounter, but I didn't know it at the time.)

"This is a pleasure!" he said. "I was at your lecture last night. How I envied you!"

I gave a rather forced smile; I'm never very sociable at breakfast, and I'd learned to be on my guard against the cranks, bores and enthusiasts who seemed to regard me as their legitimate prey. Mr. Perlman, however, was not a bore—though he was certainly an enthusiast, and I suppose you could call him a crank.

He looked like any average, fairly prosperous businessman, and I assumed that he was a guest like myself. The fact that he had attended my lecture was not surprising; it had been a popular one, open to the public, and of course well advertised over press and radio.

"Ever since I was a kid," said my uninvited companion, "Saturn has fascinated me. I know exactly when and how it all started. I must have been about ten years old when I came across those wonderful paintings of Chesley Bonestell's, showing the planet as it would look from its nine moons. I suppose you've seen them?"

"Of course," I answered. "Though they're half a century old, no one's beaten them yet. We had a couple aboard the *Endeavour*, pinned on the plotting-table. I often used to look at the pictures

and then compare them with the real thing."

"Then you know how I felt, back in the 1950's. I used to sit for hours, trying to grasp the fact that this incredible object, with its silver rings spinning around it, wasn't just some artist's dream but actually existed—that it was a world, in fact, ten times the size of Earth.

"At that time I never imagined that I could see this wonderful thing for myself; I took it for granted that only the astronomers, with their giant telescopes, could ever look at such sights. But then, when I was about fifteen, I made another discovery—so exciting that I could hardly believe it."

"And what was that?" I asked. By now I'd become reconciled to sharing breakfast; my companion seemed a harmless enough character, and there was something quite endearing about his obvious enthusiasm.

"I found that any fool could make a high-powered astronomical telescope in his own kitchen, for a few dollars and a couple of week's work. It was a revelation; like thousands of other kids, I borrowed a copy of Ingalls' *Amateur Telescope Making* from the public library, and went ahead. Tell me—have you ever built a telescope of your own?"

"No: I'm an engineer, not an astronomer. I wouldn't know how to begin the job."

"It's incredibly simple, if you follow the rules. You start with two discs of glass, about an inch thick. I got mine for fifty cents from a ships' chandler's; they were port-hole glasses that were no use because they'd been chipped round the edges. Then you cement one disc to some flat, firm surface—I used an old barrel, standing on end.

"Next you have to buy several grades of emery powder, starting from coarse, gritty stuff and working down to the finest that's made. You lay a pinch of the coarsest powder between the two discs, and start rubbing the upper one back and forth with regular strokes. As you do so, you slowly walk round the job.

"You see what happens? The upper disc gets hollowed out by the cutting action of the emery powder, and as you circle round, it shapes itself into a concave, spherical surface. From time to time you have to change to a finer grade of powder, and make some simple optical tests to check that your curve's right.

"Later still, you drop the emery and switch to rouge, until at last you have a smooth, polished surface that you can hardly credit you've made yourself. There's only one more step, though that's a little tricky. You still have to silver the mirror, and turn it into a good reflector. This means getting some chemicals made up at the drug

store, and doing exactly what the book says.

"I can still remember the kick I got, when the silver film began to spread like magic across the face of my little mirror. It wasn't perfect, but it was good enough, and I wouldn't have swapped it for anything on Mount Palomar.

"I fixed it at one end of a wooden plank; there was no need to bother about a telescope tube, though I put a couple of feet of cardboard round the mirror to cut out stray light. For an eyepiece I used a small magnifying lens I'd picked up in a junk store for a few cents. Altogether, I don't suppose the telescope cost more than five dollars—though that was a lot of money to me, when I was a kid.

"We were living then in a run-down hotel my family owned on Third Avenue. When I'd assembled the telescope I went up on the roof and tried it out, among the jungle of TV antennas that covered every building in those days. It took me awhile to get the mirror and eyepiece lined up, but I hadn't made any mistakes and the thing worked. As an optical instrument it was probably lousy—after all, it was my first attempt—but it magnified at least fifty times and I could hardly wait until nightfall to try it on the stars.

"I'd checked with the almanac, and knew that Saturn was high in the east after sunset. As soon as it was dark I was up on the roof

again, with my crazy contraption of wood and glass propped between two chimneys. It was late fall, but I never noticed the cold, for the sky was full of stars—and they were all mine.

"I took my time setting the focus as accurately as possible, using the first star that came into the field. Then I started hunting for Saturn, and soon discovered how hard it was to locate anything in a reflecting telescope that wasn't properly mounted. But presently the planet shot across the field of view, I nudged the instrument a few inches this way and that—and there it was.

"It was tiny, but it was perfect. I don't think I breathed for a minute; I could hardly believe my eyes. After all the pictures, here was the reality. It looked like a toy hanging there in space, with the rings slightly open and tilted towards me. Even now, forty years later, I can remember thinking, 'It looks so *artificial*—like something from a Christmas tree!' There was a single bright star to the left of it, and I knew that was Titan."

He paused, and for a moment we must have shared the same thoughts. For to both of us, Titan was no longer merely the largest moon of Saturn—a point of light known only to astronomers. It was the fiercely hostile world upon which *Endeavour* had landed, and where three of my crew-mates lay in lonely graves, further from their

homes than any of Mankind's dead had ever rested before.

"I don't know how long I stared, straining my eyes and moving the telescope across the sky in jerky steps as Saturn rose above the city. I was a billion miles from New York; but presently New York caught up with me.

"I told you about our hotel; it belonged to my mother, but father ran it—not very well. It had been losing money for years, and all through my boyhood there had been continuous financial crises. So I don't want to blame my father for drinking; he must have been half-crazy with worry most of the time. And I had quite forgotten that I was supposed to be helping the clerk at the reception desk.

. . .

"So Dad came looking for me, full of his own cares and knowing nothing about my dreams. He found me star-gazing on the roof.

"He wasn't a cruel man—he couldn't have understood the study and patience and care that had gone into my little telescope, or the wonders it had shown me during the short time I had used it. I don't hate him any more, but I'll remember all my life the splintering crack of my first and last mirror as it smashed against the brickwork."

There was nothing I could say. My initial resentment at this interruption had long since changed to curiosity. Already I sensed that

there was much more to this story than I'd heard so far; and I'd noticed something else. The waitress was treating us with an exaggerated deference—only a little of which was directed at me.

My companion toyed with the sugar-bowl while I waited in silent sympathy. By this time I felt there was some bond between us, though I did not know exactly what it was.

"I never built another telescope," he said. "Something else broke, besides that mirror—something in my heart. Anyway, I was much too busy. Two things happened that turned my life upside down. Dad walked out on us, leaving me the head of the family. And then they pulled down the Third Avenue El."

He must have seen my puzzled look, for he grinned across the table at me.

"Oh, you wouldn't know about that. But when I was a kid there was an elevated railroad down the middle of Third. It made the whole area dirty and noisy; the Avenue was a slum district of bars, pawn-shops and cheap hotels—like ours. All that changed when the El went; land values shot up, and we were suddenly prosperous. Dad came back quickly enough, but it was too late; I was running the business. Before long I started moving across town—then across country. I wasn't an absent-minded star-gazer any more, and I gave Dad one of my smaller hotels,

where he couldn't do much harm.

"It's forty years since I looked at Saturn, but I've never forgotten that one glimpse, and last night your photographs brought it all back. I just wanted to say how grateful I am."

He fumbled in his wallet and pulled out a card.

"I hope you'll look me up when you're in town again; you can be sure I'll be there if you give any more lectures. Good luck—and I'm sorry to have taken so much of your time."

Then he was gone, almost before I could say a word. I glanced at the card, put it away in my pocket, and finished my breakfast, rather thoughtfully.

When I signed my check on the way out of the Coffee Shop I asked: "Who was that gentleman at my table? The boss?"

The cashier looked at me as if I were mentally retarded.

"I suppose you *could* call him that, sir," she answered. "Of course he owns this hotel, but we've never seen him here before. He always stays at the Ambassador, when he's in Chicago."

"And does he own *that*?" I said, without too much irony, for I'd already suspected the answer.

"Why, yes. As well as—" and she rattled off a whole string of others, including the two biggest hotels in New York.

I was impressed, and also rather amused, for it was now obvi-

ous that Mr. Perlman had come here with the deliberate intention of meeting me. It seemed a round-about way of doing it; I knew nothing, then, of his notorious shyness and secretiveness. From the first, he was never shy with me.

Then I forgot about him for five years. (Oh, I should mention that when I asked for my hotel bill, I was told I didn't have one.) During that five years, I made my second trip.

We knew what to expect this time, and weren't going completely into the unknown. There were no more worries about fuel, cause all we could ever use was waiting for us on Titan; we just had to pump its methane atmosphere into our tanks, and we'd made our plans accordingly. One after another, we visited all the nine moons; and then we went into the rings. . . .

There was little danger, yet it was a nerve-wracking experience. The ring system is very thin, you know—only about twenty miles in thickness. We descended into it slowly and cautiously, after having matched its spin so that we were moving at exactly the same speed. It was like stepping on to a carousel 170,000 miles across. . . .

But a ghostly kind of carousel, because the rings aren't solid and you can look right through them. Close-up, in fact, they're almost invisible; the billions of separate

particles that make them up are so widely spaced that all you see in your immediate neighbourhood are occasional small chunks, drifting very slowly past. It's only when you look into the distance that the countless fragments merge into a continuous sheet, like a hail-storm that sweeps round Saturn forever.

That's not *my* phrase, but it's a good one. For when we brought our first piece of genuine Saturnian ring into the airlock, it melted down in a few minutes into a pool of muddy water. Some people think it spoils the magic to know that the rings—or 90% of them—are made of ordinary ice. But that's a stupid attitude; they would be just as wonderful, just as beautiful, and no more so, if they were made of diamond.

When I got back to Earth, in the first year of the new century, I started off on another lecture tour—only a short one, for now I had a family and wanted to see as much of it as possible. This time I ran into Mr. Perlman in New York, when I was speaking at Columbia and showing our movie *Exploring Saturn*. (A misleading title, that, since the nearest we'd been to the planet itself was about twenty thousand miles. No one dreamed, in those days, that men would ever go down into the turbulent slush which is the closest thing Saturn has to a surface.)

Mr. Perlman was waiting for me after the lecture; I didn't recog-



nise him, for I'd met about a million people since our last encounter. But when he gave his name, it all came back, so clearly that I realised he must have made a deep impression on my mind.

Somehow he got me away from the crowd; though he disliked meeting people in the mass, he had an extraordinary knack of dominating any group when he found it necessary—and then clearing out before his victims knew what had happened. Though I saw him in action scores of times, I never knew how he did it.

At any rate, half an hour later we were having a superb dinner in an exclusive restaurant (his, of course). It was a wonderful meal, especially after the chicken-and-ice-cream of the lecture circuit, but he made me pay for it. Metaphorically, I mean.

Now all the facts and photos gathered by the two expeditions to Saturn were available to everyone, in hundreds of reports and books and popular articles. Mr. Perlman seemed to have read all the material that wasn't too technical; what he wanted from me was something different. Even then, I put his interest down to that of a lonely, aging man, trying to recapture a dream that had been lost in youth. I was right; but that was only a fraction of the whole picture.

He was after something that all the reports and articles failed to give. What did it *feel* like, he

wanted to know, to wake up in the morning and see that great, golden globe with its scudding cloud-belts dominating the sky? And the rings themselves—what did they do to your mind, when they were so close that they filled the heavens from end to end?

You want a poet, I said—not an engineer. But I'll tell you this; however long you look at Saturn, and fly in and out among its moons, you can never quite believe it. Every so often you find yourself thinking: "It's all a dream—a thing like that *can't* be real." And you go to the nearest viewpoint—and there it is, taking your breath away.

For you must remember that, altogether apart from our nearness, we were able to look at the rings from angles and vantage points that are quite impossible from Earth, where you always see them turned towards the sun. We could fly into their shadow, and then they would no longer gleam like silver—they would be a faint haze, a bridge of smoke across the stars.

And most of the time we could see the shadow of Saturn lying across the full width of the rings, eclipsing them so completely that it seemed as if a great bite had been taken out of them. It worked the other way, too; on the day-side of the planet, there would always be the shadow of the rings running like a dusky band parallel to the Equator and not far from it.

Above all—though we did this only a few times—we could rise high above either pole of the planet and look down upon the whole stupendous system, so that it was spread out in plan beneath us. Then we could see that instead of the four visible from Earth, there were at least a dozen separate rings, merging one into the other. When we saw this our skipper made a remark that I've never forgotten. "This," he said—and there wasn't a trace of flippancy in the words—"is where the angels have parked their haloes."

All this, and a lot more, I told Mr. Perlman in that little but oh-so-expensive restaurant just south of Central Park. When I'd finished he seemed very pleased, though he was silent for several minutes. Then he said, about as casually as you might ask the time of the next train at your local station: "Which would be the best satellite for a tourist resort?"

When the words got through to me, I nearly choked on my hundred-year-old brandy. Then I said, very patiently and politely (for after all, I'd had a wonderful dinner): "Listen, Mr. Perlman. You know as well as I do that Saturn is nearly a billion miles from Earth—much more than that when we're on opposite sides of the Sun. Someone worked out that our round-trip tickets averaged seven and a half million dollars apiece—and believe me, there was no first-

class accommodation on *Endeavour* I or II. Anyway, no matter how much money he had, no one could book a passage to Saturn. Only scientists and space-crews will be going there, for as far ahead as anyone can imagine."

I could see that my words had absolutely no effect; he merely smiled, as if he knew some secret hidden from me.

"What you say is true enough *now*," he answered, "but I've studied history. And I understand people—that's my business. Let me remind you of a few facts.

"Two or three centuries ago, almost all the world's great tourist centres and beauty spots were as far away from civilisation as Saturn is today. What did—oh, Napoleon, let's say—know about the Grand Canyon, Victoria Falls, Hawaii, Mount Everest? And look at the South Pole; it was reached for the first time when my father was a boy—but there's been an hotel there for the whole of your lifetime.

"Now it's starting all over again. You can appreciate only the problems and difficulties, because you're too close to them. Whatever they are, men will overcome them, as they've always done in the past.

"For wherever there's something strange or beautiful or novel, people will want to see it. The rings of Saturn are the greatest spectacle in the known universe; I've always guessed so, and now you've con-

vinced me. Today it takes a fortune to reach them, and the men who go there must risk their lives. So did the first men who flew—but now there are a million passengers in the air every second of the day and night.

"The same thing is going to happen in space. It won't happen in ten years, maybe not in twenty. But twenty-five is all it took, remember, before the first commercial flights started to the Moon. I don't think it will be as long for Saturn. . . .

"I won't be around to see it—but when it happens, I want people to remember me. So—where should we build?"

I still thought he was crazy, but at last I was beginning to understand what made him tick. And there was no harm in humouring him, so I gave the matter careful thought.

"Mimas is too close," I said, "and so are Enceladus and Tethys." (I don't mind telling you, those names were tough after all that brandy.) "Saturn just fills the sky, and you think it's falling on top of you. Besides, they aren't solid enough—they're nothing but overgrown snowballs. Dione and Rhea are better—you get a magnificent view from both of them. But all these inner moons are so tiny; even Rhea is only eight hundred miles across, and the others are much smaller.

"I don't think there's any real

argument; it will have to be Titan. That's a man-sized satellite—it's a lot bigger than *our* Moon, and very nearly as large as Mars. There's a reasonable gravity too—about a fifth of Earth's—so your guests won't be floating all over the place. And it will always be a major refuelling point because of its methane atmosphere, which should be an important factor in your calculations. Every ship that goes out to Saturn will touch down there."

"And the outer moons?"

"Oh, Hyperion, Iapetus and Phoebe are much too far away. You have to look hard to see the rings at all from Phoebe! Forget about them. Stick to good old Titan. Even if the temperature is two hundred below zero, and ammonia snow isn't the sort of stuff you'd want to ski on."

He listened to me very carefully, and if he thought I was making fun of his impractical, unscientific notions he gave no sign of it. We parted soon afterwards—I don't remember anything more of that dinner—and then it must have been fifteen years before we met again. He had no further use for me in all that time; but when he wanted me, he called.

I see now what he had been waiting for; his vision had been clearer than mine. He couldn't have guessed, of course, that the rocket would go the way of the steam-engine within less than a

century of its first use—but he knew that *something* better would come along, and I think he financed Saunderson's early work on the Paragravity Drive. But it was not until they started building fusion plants that could warm up a hundred square miles of a world as cold as Pluto that he contacted me again.

He was a very old man, and dying. They told me how rich he was, and I could hardly believe it. Not until he showed me the elaborate plans and the beautiful models his experts had prepared with such remarkable lack of publicity.

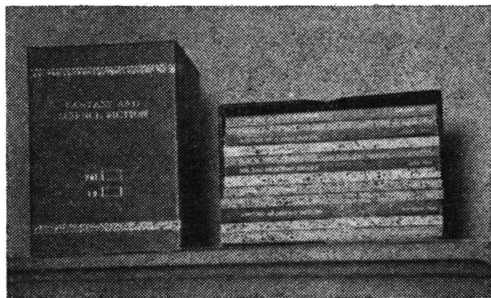
He sat in his wheel-chair like a

wrinkled mummy, watching my face as I studied the models and blueprints. Then he said: "Captain, I have a job for you . . .

So here I am. It's just like running a spaceship, of course—many of the technical problems are identical. And by this time I'd be too old to command a ship, so I'm very grateful, naturally, to Mr. Perlman.

There goes the gong. If the ladies are ready, I suggest we walk down to dinner through the Observation Lounge.

Even after all these years, I still like to watch Saturn rising—and tonight it's almost full.



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## STITCH IN TIME

by John Wyndham

ON THE SHELTERED SIDE OF the house the sun was hot. Just inside the open French windows Mrs. Dolderson moved her chair a few inches so that her head would remain in the shade while the warmth could comfort the rest of her. Then she leaned her head back on the cushion, looking out.

The scene was, for her, timeless.

Across the smooth lawn the cedar stood as it had always stood. Its flat spread boughs must, she supposed, reach a little further now than they had when she was a child, but it was hard to tell; the tree had seemed huge then, it seemed huge now. Further on, the boundary hedge was just as trim and neat as it had always been. The gate into the spinney was still flanked by the two unidentifiable topiary birds, Cocky and Olly—wonderful that they should still be there, even though Olly's tail feathers had become a bit twiggy with age.

The flower-bed on the left, in front of the shrubbery, was as full of colour as ever—well, perhaps a little brighter; one had a feeling that flowers had become a trifle more strident than they used to be, but delightful nevertheless. The spinney beyond the hedge, however, had changed a little; more young trees, some of the larger ones gone. Between the branches one had two glimpses of pink roof where there had been no neighbours in the old days. Except for that one could almost, for a moment, forget a whole lifetime.

The afternoon drowsing while the birds rested, the bees humming, the leaves gently stirring, the bonk-bonk from the tennis court round the corner, with an occasional voice giving the score. It might have been any sunny afternoon out of fifty, or sixty, summers.

Mrs. Dolderson smiled upon it, and loved it all; she had loved it

when she was a girl, she loved it even more now.

In this house she had been born; she had grown up in it, married from it, come back to it after her father died, brought up her own two children in it, grown old in it. . . . Some years after the second war she had come very near to losing it—but not quite; and here she was still. . . .

It was Harold who had made it possible. A clever boy, and a wonderful son. . . . When it had become quite clear that she could no longer afford to keep the house up, that it would have to be sold, it was Harold who had persuaded his firm to buy it. Their interest, he had told her, lay not in the house, but in the site—as would any buyer's. The house itself was almost without value now, but the position was convenient. As a condition of sale, four rooms on the south side had been converted into a flat which was to be hers for life. The rest of the house had become a hostel housing some twenty young people who worked in the laboratories and offices which had been built on the north side, on the site of the stables and part of the paddock.

One day, she knew, the old house would come down, she had seen the plans, but for the present, for her time, both it and the garden to the south and west could remain untouched. Harold had assured her that they would

not be required for fifteen or twenty years yet—much longer than she would know the need of them. . . .

Nor, Mrs. Dolderson thought calmly, would she be really sorry to go. One became useless, and, now that she must have a wheelchair, a burden to others. There was the feeling, too, that she no longer belonged—that she had become a stranger in another people's world. It had all altered so much; first changing into a place that was difficult to understand, then growing so much more complex that one gave up trying to understand. No wonder, she thought, that the old become possessive about *things*; cling to objects which link them with the world that they *could* understand. . . .

Harold was a dear boy, and for his sake she did her best not to appear too stupid—but, often, it was difficult. Today, at lunch, for instance, he had been so excited about some experiment that was to take place this afternoon. He had *had* to talk about it, even though he must know that practically nothing of what he said was comprehensible to her.

Something about dimensions again—she had grasped that much, but she had only nodded, and not attempted to go further. Last time the subject had cropped up, she had observed that in her youth there had been only three,

and she did not see how even all this progress in the world could have added more. This had set him off on a dissertation about the mathematician's view of the world through which it was, apparently, possible to perceive the existence of a series of dimensions. Even the moment of existence in relation to time was, it seemed, some kind of dimension. Philosophically, Harold had begun to explain—but there, and at once, she had lost him. He led straight into confusion. She felt sure that when she was young, philosophy, mathematics, and metaphysics had all been quite separate studies—nowadays they seemed to have quite incomprehensibly run together.

So this time she had listened quietly, making small, encouraging sounds from time to time, until at the end he had smiled ruefully, and told her she was a dear to be so patient with him. Then he had come round the table and kissed her cheek gently as he put his hand over hers, and she had wished him the best of luck with the afternoon's mysterious experiment. Then Jenny had come in to clear the table, and wheel her closer to the window. . . .

The warmth of the slumbrous afternoon carried her into a half-dream, took her back fifty years to just such an afternoon when she had sat here in this very window—though certainly with no

thought of a wheelchair in those days—waiting for Arthur . . . waiting with an ache in her heart for Arthur . . . and Arthur had never come. . . .

Strange, it was, the way things fell out. If Arthur had come that day she would almost certainly have married him. And then Harold and Cynthia would never have existed. She would have had children, of course, but they would not have been Harold and Cynthia. . . . What a curious, haphazard thing one's existence was. Just by saying 'no' to one man, and 'yes' to another a woman might bring into existence a potential archbishop, or a potential murderer. How foolish they all were nowadays—trying to tidy everything up, make life secure, while behind, back in everyone's past, stretched the chance-studded line of women who had said 'yes' or 'no,' as the fancy took them.

Curious that she should remember Arthur now. It must be years since she had thought of him. . . .

She had been quite sure that he would propose that afternoon. It was before she had even heard of Colin Dolderson. And she would have agreed. Oh yes, she would have accepted him.

There had never been any explanation. She had never known *why* he did not come then—or any more. He had never written

to her. Ten days, perhaps a fortnight later there had been a somewhat impersonal note from his mother telling her that he had been ill, and the doctor had advised sending him abroad. But after that, nothing at all—until the day she had seen his name in a newspaper, more than two years later. . . .

She had been angry of course—a girl owed that to her pride—and hurt, too, for a time. Yet how could one know that it had not been for the best, in the end? Would his children have been as dear to her, or as kind, and as clever as Harold and Cynthia. . . ?

Such an infinity of chances . . . all those genes and things they talked about nowadays. . . .

The thump of tennis balls had ceased, and the players had gone, returned, presumably, to their recondite work. Bees continued to hum purposefully among the flowers; half-a-dozen butterflies were visiting there too, though in a dilettante, unairworthy-looking way. The further trees shimmered in the rising heat. The afternoon's drowsiness became irresistible. Mrs. Dolderson did not oppose it. She leaned her head back, half aware that somewhere another humming sound, higher in pitch than the bees', had started, but it was not loud enough to be disturbing. She let her eyelids drop. . . .

Suddenly, only a few yards away, but out of sight as she sat, there were feet on the path. The sound of them began quite abruptly, as if someone had just stepped from the grass on to the path—only she would have seen anyone crossing the grass. Simultaneously there was the sound of a baritone voice, singing cheerfully but not loudly to itself. It too began quite suddenly; in the middle of a word in fact:

“—rybody's doin' it, doin' it, doin' it.

See that rag—”

The voice cut off suddenly. The footsteps, too, came to a dead stop.

Mrs. Dolderson's eyes were open now—very wide open. Her thin hands gripped the arms of her chair. She recollected the tune: more than that, she was even certain of the voice—after all these years. . . . A silly dream, she told herself. She had been remembering him only a few moment before she closed her eyes . . . how foolish!

And yet it was curiously undreamlike. Everything was so sharp and clear, so familiarly reasonable . . . the arms of the chair quite solid under her fingers. . . .

Another idea leaped into her mind. She had died. That was why it was not like an ordinary dream. Sitting here in the sun, she must have quietly died. The doctor



had said it might happen quite unexpectedly . . . and now it had! She had a swift moment of relief—not that she had felt any great fear of death, but there had been that sense of ordeal ahead. Now it was over—and with no ordeal. As simple as falling asleep. She felt suddenly happy about it; quite exhilarated. Though it was odd that she still seemed to be tied to her chair. . . .

The gravel crunched under shifting feet. A bewildered voice said:

"That's rum! Dashed queer! What the devil's happened?"

Mrs. Dolderson sat motionless in her chair. There was no doubt whatever about the voice.

A pause. The feet shifted, as if uncertain. Then they came on, but slowly now, hesitantly. They brought a young man into her view. Oh, such a very young man, he looked. She felt a little catch at her heart.

He was dressed in a striped club-blazer, and white flannel trousers. There was a silk scarf round his neck, and, tilted back off his forehead, a straw hat with a coloured band. His hands were in his trousers' pockets, and he carried a tennis racquet under his left arm.

She saw him first in profile, and not quite at his best, for his expression was bewildered, and his mouth slightly open, as he stared towards the spinney.

"Arthur," Mrs. Dolderson said gently.

He was startled. The racquet slipped, and clattered on the path. He attempted to pick it up, take off his hat, and recover his composure, all at the same time, not very successfully. When he straightened his face was pink, and its expression still confused.

He looked at the old lady in the chair, her knees hidden by a rug, her thin, delicate hands gripping the arms. His gaze went beyond her, into the room. His confusion increased, with a touch of alarm added. His eyes went back to the old lady. She was regarding him intently. He could not recall ever having seen her before, did not know who she could be—yet in her eyes there seemed to be something faintly not unfamiliar.

She dropped her gaze to her right hand. She studied it for a moment as though it puzzled her a little, then she raised her eyes again to his.

"You don't know me, Arthur?" she asked quietly.

There was a note of sadness in her voice that he took for disappointment, tinged with reproof. He did his best to pull himself together.

"I—I'm afraid not," he confessed. "You see I—er—you—er—" He stuck, and then went on desperately: "You must be Thelma's—Miss Kilder's—aunt?"

She looked at him steadily for

some moments. He did not understand her expression, but then she told him:

"No. I am not Thelma's aunt." Again his gaze went into the room behind her. This time he shook his head in bewilderment.

"It's all different—no, sort of half-different," he said, in distress. "I say, I can't have come to the wrong—" He broke off, and turned to look at the garden again. "No, it certainly isn't that," he answered himself decisively. "But what—what *has* happened?"

His amazement was no longer simple; he was looking badly shaken. His bewildered eyes came back to her again.

"Please—I don't understand—*how* did you know me?" he asked.

His increasing distress troubled her, and made her careful.

"I recognized you, Arthur. We have met before, you know?"

"Have we? I can't remember—I'm terribly sorry . . ."

"You're looking unwell, Arthur. Draw up that chair, and rest a little."

"Thank you Mrs.—er—Mrs.—?"

"Dolderson," she told him.

"Thank you, Mrs. Dolderson," he said, frowning a little, trying to place the name.

She watched him pull the chair closer. Every movement, every line familiar, even to the lock of his fair hair that always fell forward when he stooped. He sat

down and remained silent for some moments, staring under a frown, across the garden.

Mrs. Dolderson sat still, too. She was scarcely less bewildered than he, though she did not reveal it. Clearly the thought that she was dead had been quite silly. She was just as usual, still in her chair, still aware of the ache in her back, still able to grip the arms of the chair and feel them. It was not a dream—everything was too textured, too solid, too real in a way that dream things never were. Was it just a simple hallucination, a trick of her mind imposing Arthur's face on an entirely different young man? She glanced at him. No, that would not do—he had answered to Arthur's name. Indubitably he was Arthur, and wearing Arthur's blazer, too. They did not cut them that way nowadays, and it was years and years since she had seen a young man wearing a straw hat.

A kind of ghost . . . ? But no, he was quite solid; the chair had creaked as he sat down, his shoes had crunched on the gravel. Besides, whoever heard of a ghost in the form of a thoroughly bewildered young man, and one, moreover, who had recently nicked himself in shaving?

He cut her thoughts short by turning his head.

"I thought Thelma would be here," he told her. "She *said*

she'd be here. Please tell me, where is she?"

Like a frightened little boy, she thought. She wanted to comfort him, not to frighten him more. But she could think of nothing to say beyond:

"Thelma isn't far away."

"I must find her. She'll be able to tell me what's happened." He made to get up.

She laid a hand on his arm, and pressed down gently.

"Wait a minute," she told him. "What is it that seems to have happened? What is it that worries you so much?"

"This," he said, waving a hand to include everything about them. "It's all different—and yet the same—and yet not. I feel as if—as if I'd gone a little mad."

She looked at him steadily, and then shook her head.

"I don't think you have. Tell me, what is it that's wrong?"

"I was coming here to play tennis—well, to see Thelma, really," he amended. "Everything was all right then, just as usual. I rode up the drive and leaned my bike against the big fir tree where the path begins. I started to come along the path and then, just when I reached the corner of the house, everything went funny. . . ."

"Went funny?" Mrs. Dolderson inquired. "What—went funny?"

"Well, nearly everything. The sun seemed to jerk in the sky. The

trees suddenly looked bigger, and not quite the same. The flowers in the bed over there went quite a different colour. The creeper was all over the wall, and then was suddenly only halfway up—and it looks like a different *kind* of creeper. And there are houses over there. I never saw them before—it's just an open field beyond the spinney. Even the gravel on the path looks more yellow than I thought. And this room . . . it is the same room. I know that desk, and the fireplace—and those two pictures. But the paper is quite different. I've never seen that before—but it isn't new, either. . . . Please tell me where Thelma is—I want her to explain it. I *must* have gone a bit mad. . . ."

She put her hand on his, firmly.

"No," she said decisively. "Whatever it is, I'm quite sure it's not that."

"Then what—" He broke off abruptly, and listened, his head a little on one side. The sound grew. "What is it?" he asked, anxiously.

Mrs. Dolderson tightened her hand over his.

"It's all right," she said, as if to a child. "It's all right, Arthur."

She could feel him grow tenser as the sound increased. It passed right overhead at less than a thousand feet, jets shrieking, leaving the buffeted air behind it rum-

bling back and forth, shuddering gradually back to peace.

Arthur saw it. Watched it disappear. His face when he turned it back to her was white and frightened. In a queer voice he asked:

"What—what was that?"

Quietly, as if to force calm upon him, she said:

"Just an aeroplane, Arthur. Such horrid, noisy things they are."

He gazed where it had vanished, and shook his head.

"But I've *seen* an aeroplane, and *heard* it. It isn't like that. It makes a noise like a motor-bike, only louder. This was terrible! I don't understand—I don't understand what's happened. . . ." His voice was pathetic.

Mrs. Dolderson made as if to reply, and then checked at a thought, a sudden sharp recollection of Harold talking about dimensions, of shifting them into different planes, speaking of time as though it were simply another dimension. . . . With a kind of shock of intuition she understood—no, understood was too firm a word—she perceived. But, perceiving, she found herself at a loss. She looked again at the young man. He was still tense, trembling slightly. He was wondering whether he was going out of his mind. She must stop that. There was no kind way—but how to be least unkind?

"Arthur," she said, abruptly.

He turned a dazed look on her.

Deliberately she made her voice brisk.

"You'll find a bottle of brandy in that cupboard. Please fetch it—and two glasses," she ordered.

With a kind of sleep-walking movement he obeyed. She filled a third of a tumbler with brandy for him, and poured a little for herself.

"Drink that," she told him. He hesitated. "Go on," she commanded. "You've had a shock. It will do you good. I want to talk to you, and I can't talk to you while you're knocked half-silly."

He drank, and coughed a little, and sat down again.

"Finish it," she told him firmly. He finished it. Presently she inquired:

"Feeling better now?"

He nodded, but said nothing. She made up her mind, and drew breath carefully. Dropping the brisk tone altogether, she asked:

"Arthur. Tell me, what day is it today?"

"Day?" he said, in surprise. "Why, it's Friday. It's the—er—twenty-seventh of June."

"But the year, Arthur. What year?"

He turned his face fully towards her.

"I'm not really mad, you know. I know who I am, and where I am—I think. It's *things* that have

gone wrong, not me. I can tell you—"

"What I want you to tell me, Arthur, is the year." The peremptory note was back in her voice again.

He kept his eyes steadily on hers as he spoke.

"Nineteen-Thirteen, of course, he said.

Mrs. Dolderson's gaze went back to the lawn and the flowers. She nodded gently. That was the year—and it had been a Friday; odd that she should remember that. It might well have been the twenty-seventh of June. But certainly it was a Friday in the summer of 1913 that he had not come. All so long, long ago. . . .

His voice recalled her. It was unsteady with anxiety.

"Why do you ask me that—about the year, I mean?"

His brow was so creased, his eyes so anxious. He was very young. Her heart ached for him. She put her thin fragile hand on his strong one again.

"I—I think I know," he said shakily. "It's—I don't see how, but you wouldn't have asked that unless. . . . That's the queer thing that's happened, isn't it? Somehow it isn't Nineteen-Thirteen any longer—that's what you mean? The way the trees grew . . . that aeroplane . . ." He stopped, staring at her with wide eyes. "You must tell me. Please, please, what's happened to me?"

Where am I now? Where is this?"

"My poor boy," she murmured.

"Oh, please—"

*The Times*, with the crossword partly done, was pushed down into the chair beside her. She pulled it out half-reluctantly. Then she folded it over and held it towards him. His hand shook as he took it.

"London, Monday, the first of July," he read. And then, in an incredulous whisper: "*Nineteen-Sixty-Three!*"

He lowered the page, looked at her imploringly.

She nodded twice, slowly.

They sat staring at one another without a word. Gradually, his expression changed. His brows came together, as though with pain. He looked round jerkily, his eyes darting here and there as if for an escape. Then they came back to her. He screwed them shut for a moment. Then opened them again, full of hurt—and fear.

"Oh, no—no! No! You're not . . . you can't be. You—you told me . . . you're Mrs. Dolderson, aren't you? You said you were. You can't—you can't be—Thelma?"

Mrs. Dolderson said nothing. They gazed at one another. His face creased up like a small child's.

"Oh, God! Oh—oh!" he cried, and hid his face in his hands.

Mrs. Dolderson's eyes closed for a moment. When they opened she had control of herself again. Sadly

she looked on the shaking shoulders. Her thin, blue-veined left hand reached out towards the bowed head, and stroked the fair hair, gently.

Her right hand found the bell-push on the table beside her. She pressed it, and kept her finger upon it. . . .

At the sound of movement her eyes opened. The venetian blind shaded the room but let in light enough for her to see Harold standing beside her bed.

"I didn't mean to wake you, Mother," he said.

"You didn't wake me, Harold. I was dreaming, but I was not asleep. Sit down, my dear. I want to talk to you."

"You mustn't tire yourself, Mother. You've had a bit of a relapse, you know."

"I daresay, but I find it more tiring to wonder than to know. I shan't keep you long."

"Very well, Mother." He pulled up a chair close to the bedside and sat down, taking her hand in his. She looked at his face in the dimness.

"It was you who did it, wasn't it, Harold? It was that experiment of yours that brought poor Arthur here?"

"It was an accident, Mother."

"Tell me."

"We were trying it out. Just a preliminary test. We knew it was theoretically possible. We had

shown that if we could—oh, it's so difficult to explain in words—if we could, well, twist a dimension, kind of fold it back on itself, then two points that are normally apart must coincide. I'm afraid that's not very clear. . . ."

"Never mind, dear. Go on."

"Well, when we had our field-distortion-generator fixed up, we set it to bring together two points that are normally fifty years apart. Think of folding over a long strip of paper that has two marks on it, so that the marks are brought together."

"Yes?"

"It was quite arbitrary. We might have chosen ten years, or a hundred, but we just picked fifty. And we got astonishingly close, too, Mother, quite remarkably close. Only a four-day calendar error in fifty years. It's staggered us. The thing we've got to do now is to find out that source of error, but if you'd asked any of us to bet—"

"Yes, dear, I'm sure it was quite wonderful. But what *happened*?"

"Oh, sorry. Well, as I said, it was an accident. We only had the thing switched on for three or four seconds—and he must have walked slap into the field of coincidence right then. A millions-to-one chance. I wish it had not happened, but we couldn't possibly know . . ."

She turned her head on the pillow.

"No. You couldn't know," she agreed. "And then?"

"Nothing, really. We didn't know until Jenny answered your bell and found you in a faint, and this chap, Arthur, all gone to pieces, and sent for me.

"One of the girls helped to get you to bed. Doctor Sole arrived and took a look at you. Then he pumped some kind of tranquillizer into this Arthur. The poor fellow needed it, too—one hell of a thing to happen when all you were expecting was a game of tennis with your best girl.

"When he'd quietened down a bit, he told us who he was, and where he'd come from. Well, there was a thing for you! Accidental living proof at the first shot.

"But all he wanted, poor devil, was to get back just as soon as he could. He was very distressed—quite a painful business. Doctor Sole wanted to put him right under to stop him cracking altogether. It looked that way, too—and it didn't look as if he'd be any better when he came round again, either.

"We didn't know if we *could* send him back. Transference 'forward,' to put it crudely, can be regarded as an infinite acceleration of a natural progression, but the idea of transference 'back' is full of the most disconcerting implications once you start thinking about it. There was quite a bit of argument, but Doctor Sole clinched it. If there was a fair chance, he

said, the chap had a right to try, and we had an obligation to try to undo what we'd done to him. Apart from that, if we did not try we should certainly have to explain to someone how we came to have a raving loony on our hands, and fifty years off course, so to speak.

"We tried to make it clear to this Arthur that we couldn't be sure that it would work in reverse—and that anyway there was this four-day calendar error, so at best it wouldn't be exact. I don't think he really grasped that. The poor fellow was in a wretched state; all he wanted was just a chance—any kind of chance—to get out of here. He was simply one-track.

"So we decided to take the risk—after all, if it turned out not to be possible he'd—well, he'd know nothing about it, or nothing would happen at all. . . .

"The generator was still on the same setting. We put one fellow on to that, took this Arthur back to the path by your room, and got him lined up there.

"'Now walk forward,' we told him. 'Just as you were walking when it happened.' And we gave the switch-on signal. What with the doctor's dope and one thing and another he was pretty groggy, but he did his best to pull himself together. He went forward at a kind of stagger. Literal-minded fellow; he was half-crying, but in a queer sort of voice he was trying

to sing: 'Everybody's doin' it, do—'

"And then he disappeared—just vanished completely." He paused, and added regretfully: "All the evidence we have now is not very convincing—one tennis racquet, practically new, but vintage; and one straw hat, ditto."

Mrs. Dolderson lay without speaking. He said:

"We did our best, Mother. We could only try."

"Of course you did, dear. And you succeeded. It wasn't your fault that you couldn't undo what you'd done. No, I was just wondering what would have happened if it had been a few minutes earlier, or later, that you had switched your machine on. But I don't suppose that *could* have happened, or you wouldn't have been you at all."

He looked at her a little uneasily.

"What *do* you mean, Mother?" he asked.

"Never mind, dear. You did *your* best—and I expect it was *the* best. . . ."

"He was much too distressed for us to try to keep him here. He'd

have gone all to pieces. What else could we have done?"

"I don't know—nothing, I think. It was written, I suppose. . . ."

"What makes you think we succeeded in getting him back, Mother?"

"I *know* you did, dear." She paused, then, in a quiet flat voice, as if quoting, she said:

"'Arthur Waring Batley. Second Lieutenant, of wounds received in action in France. Third of November, Nineteen-Fifteen.'"

She closed her eyes. A tear escaped, and ran slowly down her cheek. Harold pulled out his handkerchief to wipe it away. She pressed his hand, but did not speak. High above the house the whine of a jet plane swelled and died away.

Mrs. Dolderson said:

"I shan't be sorry to go. It will hurt to leave you, Harold, my dear, but that's all I shall really mind when the time comes. Perhaps I'm a little like poor Arthur; I don't much like your world—nor the things it learns to do."







*Hand me, said the Good Doctor, a one-half piece of chalk, and I'll hand you the square-root-of-minus-one pieces of chalk. . . .*

## THE IMAGINARY THAT ISN'T

*by Isaac Asimov*

WHEN I WAS A MERE SLIP of a lad and attended college, I had a friend with whom I ate lunch every day. His 11 A.M. class was in sociology, which I absolutely refused to take, and my 11 A.M. class was calculus which he as steadfastly refused to take—so we had to separate at 11 and meet at 12.

As it happened, his sociology professor was a scholar who did things in the grand manner, holding court after class was over. The more eager students gathered close and listened to him pontificate for an additional fifteen minutes, while they threw in an occasional log in the form of a question to feed the flame of oracle.

Consequently, when my calculus lecture was over, I had to enter the sociology room and wait patiently for court to conclude.

Once I walked in when the professor was listing on the board his classification of mankind into the two groups of mystics and realists, and under mystics he had included the mathematicians along with the poets and theologians. One student wanted to know why.

"Mathematicians," said the professor, "are mystics because they believe in numbers that have no reality."

Now ordinarily, as a non-member of the class, I sat in the

corner, suffering in silent boredom, but now I rose convulsively, and said, "What numbers?"

The professor looked in my direction and said, "The square root of minus one. It has no existence. Mathematicians call it imaginary. But they believe it has some kind of existence in a mystical way."

"There's nothing mystical about it," I said, angrily. "The square root of minus one is just as real as any other number."

The professor smiled, feeling he had a live one on whom he could now proceed to display his superiority of intellect. (I have since had classes of my own and I know exactly how he felt.) He said, silkily, "We have a young mathematician here who wants to prove the reality of the square root of minus one. Come, young man, hand me the square root of minus one pieces of chalk!"

I reddened. "Well, now, wait—"

"That's all," he said, waving his hand. Mission, he imagined, accomplished, both neatly and sweetly.

But I raised my voice. "I'll do it. I'll do it. I'll hand you the square root of minus one pieces of chalk, if you hand me a one-half piece of chalk."

The professor smiled again, and said, "Very well," broke a fresh piece of chalk in half, and handed me one of the halves. "Now for your end of the bargain."

"Ah, but wait," I said, "you haven't fulfilled your end. This is one piece of chalk you've handed me, not a one-half piece." I held it up for the others to see. "Wouldn't you all say this was one piece of chalk? It certainly isn't two or three."

Now the professor wasn't smiling. "Hold it. One piece of chalk is a piece of regulation length. You have one that's half the regulation length."

I said, "Now you're springing an arbitrary definition on me. But even if I accept it, are you willing to maintain that this is a one-half piece of chalk and not a 0.48 piece or a 0.52 piece? And can you really consider yourself qualified to discuss the square root of minus one, when you're a little hazy on the meaning of one-half?"

But by now the professor had lost his equanimity altogether and his final argument was unanswerable. He said, "Get the hell out of here!"

I left (laughing) and thereafter waited for my friend in the corridor.

Twenty years have passed since then and I suppose I ought to finish the argument. . . .

Let's start with a simple algebraic equation such as  $x + 3 = 5$ . The expression,  $x$ , represents some number which, when substituted for  $x$  makes the expression a true equality. In this particular case  $x$  must equal 2, since  $2 + 3 = 5$ , and so we have "solved for  $x$ ."

The interesting thing about this solution is that it is the *only* solution. There is no number but 2 which will give 5 when 3 is added to it.

This is true of any equation of this sort, which is called a "linear equation" (because in geometry it can be represented as a straight line) or "a polynomial equation of the first degree." No polynomial equation of the first degree can ever have more than one solution for  $x$ .

There are other equations, however, which *can* have more than one solution. Here's an example:  $x^2 - 5x + 6 = 0$ , where  $x^2$  (" $x$  square") represents  $x$  times  $x$ . This is called a "quadratic equation" from a Latin word for "square" because it involves  $x$  square. It is also called "a polynomial equation of the second degree" because of the little <sup>2</sup> in  $x^2$ . As for  $x$  itself, that could be written  $x^1$ , except that the <sup>1</sup> is always omitted and taken for granted, and that is why  $x + 3 = 5$  is an equation of the first degree.

If we take the equation  $x^2 - 5x + 6 = 0$ , and substitute 2 for  $x$ , then  $x^2$  is 4, while  $5x$  is 10, so that the equation becomes  $4 - 10 + 6 = 0$ , which is correct, making 2 a solution of the equation.

However, if we substitute 3 for  $x$ , then  $x^2$  is 9 and  $5x$  is 15, so that the equation becomes  $9 - 15 + 6 = 0$ , which is also correct, making 3 a second solution of the equation.

Now no equation of the second degree has ever been found which has more than two solutions, but what about polynomial equations of the third degree? These are equations containing  $x^3$  ( $x$  cube), which are therefore also called "cubic equations." The expression  $x^3$  represents  $x$  times  $x$  times  $x$ .

The equation,  $x^3 - 6x^2 + 11x - 6 = 0$ , has three solutions, since you can substitute 1, 2, or 3 for  $x$  in this equation and come up with a true equality in each case. No cubic equation has ever been found with more than three solutions, however.

In the same way polynomial equations of the fourth degree can be constructed which have four solutions but no more; poly-

nomial equations of the fifth degree which have five solutions but no more and so on. You might say, then, that a polynomial equation of the  $n$ th degree can have as many as  $n$  solutions, but never more than  $n$ .

Mathematicians craved something even prettier than that and by about 1800 found it. At that time, the German mathematician, Carl Friedrich Gauss, showed that every equation of the  $n$ th degree had exactly  $n$  solutions; not only no more, but also no less. Such is the theoretical importance of this that it is called "the fundamental theorem of algebra."

However, in order to make the fundamental theorem true, our notion of what constitutes a solution to an algebraic equation must be drastically enlarged.

To begin with, men accept the "natural numbers" only: 1, 2, 3, and so on. This is adequate for counting objects that are considered only as units. You can have 2 children, 5 cows or 8 pots; while to have  $2\frac{1}{2}$  children,  $5\frac{1}{4}$  cows or  $8\frac{1}{3}$  pots does not make much sense.

In measuring continuous quantities such as lengths or weights, however, fractions became essential. The Egyptians and Babylonians managed to work out methods of handling fractions, though these were not very efficient by our own standards; and no doubt conservative scholars among them sneered at the mystical mathematicians who believed in a number like  $5\frac{1}{2}$  which was neither 5 nor 6.

Such fractions are really ratios of whole numbers. To say a plank of wood was  $2\frac{5}{8}$  yards long, for instance, is to say that the length of the plank is to the length of a standard yardstick as 21 is to 8. The Greeks, however, discovered that there were definite quantities which could not be expressed as ratios of whole numbers. The first to be discovered was the square root of 2, commonly written as  $\sqrt{2}$ , which is that number which, when multiplied by itself, gives 2. There is such a number but it cannot be expressed as a ratio; hence, it is an "irrational number."

Only thus far did the notion of number extend before modern times. Thus, the Greeks accepted no number smaller than zero. How can there be less than nothing? To them, consequently, the equation  $x + 5 = 3$  had no solution. How can you add 5 to any number and have 3 as a result? Even if you added 5 to the smallest number (that is, to zero), you would have 5 as the sum, and if

you added 5 to any other number (which would have to be larger than zero) you would have a sum greater than 5.

The first mathematician to break this taboo and make systematic use of numbers less than zero was the Italian, Girolamo Cardano. After all, there *can* be less than nothing. A debt is less than nothing.

If all you own in the world is a two dollar debt, you have two dollars less than nothing. If you are then given five dollars, you end with three dollars of your own (assuming you are an honorable man who pays his debts). Consequently, in the equation  $x + 5 = 3$ ,  $x$  can be set equal to  $-2$ , where the minus sign indicates a number less than zero.

Such numbers are called "negative numbers" from a Latin word meaning "to deny" so that the very name carries the traces of the Greek denial of the existence of such numbers. Numbers greater than zero are "positive numbers" and these can be written  $+1$ ,  $+2$ ,  $+3$ , and so on.

From a practical standpoint, extending the number system by including negative numbers simplifies all sorts of computations, as, for example, those in bookkeeping.

From a theoretical standpoint, the use of negative numbers means that every equation of the first degree has exactly one solution. No more; no less.

If we pass on to the equations of the second degree, we find that the Greeks would agree with us that the equation  $x^2 - 5x + 6 = 0$  has two solutions, 2 and 3. They would say, however, that the equation  $x^2 + 4x - 5 = 0$  has only one solution, 1. Substitute 1 for  $x$  and  $x^2$  is 1, while  $4x$  is 4, so that the equation becomes  $1 + 4 - 5 = 0$ . No other number will serve as a solution, as long as you restrict yourself to positive numbers.

However, the number  $-5$  is a solution, if we consider a few rules that are worked out in connection with the multiplication of negative numbers. In order to achieve consistent results, mathematicians have decided that the multiplication of a negative number by a positive number yields a negative product, while the multiplication of a negative number by a negative number yields a positive product.

If, in the equation,  $x^2 + 4x - 5 = 0$ ,  $-5$ , is substituted for  $x$ , then  $x^2$  becomes  $-5$  times  $-5$ , or  $+25$ , while  $4x$  becomes  $+4$  times  $-5$ , or  $-20$ . The equation becomes  $25 - 20 - 5 = 0$ ,

which is true. We would say, then, that there are two solutions to this equation,  $+1$  and  $-5$ .

Sometimes, a quadratic equation does indeed seem to have but a single root, as for example,  $x^2 - 6x + 9 = 0$ , which will be a true equality if and only if the number  $+3$  is substituted for  $x$ . However, the mechanics of solution of the equation shows that there are actually two solutions, which happen to be identical. The two solutions of this equation are  $+3$  and  $+3$ . (Perhaps you think this is mystical. Well, it isn't, but I lack the space to show it by means of analytical geometry, and the Kindly Editor would slaughter me in most unkindly fashion, if I even made a motion as though to draw a graph.)

Allowing for occasional duplicate solutions, are we ready to say then that all second degree equations can be shown to have exactly two solutions if negative numbers are included in the number system?

Alas, no! For what about the equation  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ . To begin with,  $x^2$  must be  $-1$ , since substituting  $-1$  for  $x^2$  makes the equation  $-1 + 1 = 0$  which is correct enough.

But if  $x^2$  is  $-1$ , then  $x$  must be the famous square root of minus one, ( $\sqrt{-1}$ ) which occasioned the set-to between the sociology professor and myself. The square root of minus one is that number which when multiplied by itself will give  $-1$ . But there is no such number in the set of positive and negative quantities, and that is the reason the sociology professor scorned it. First,  $+1$  times  $+1$  is  $+1$ ; secondly,  $-1$  times  $-1$  is  $+1$ .

To allow any solution at all for the equation  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ , let alone two solutions, it is necessary to get past this roadblock. If no positive number will do and no negative one, either, it is absolutely essential to define a completely new kind of number; an imaginary number, if you like; one with its square equal to  $-1$ .

We could, if we wished, give the new kind of number a special sign. The plus sign does for positives and the minus sign for negatives; so we could use an asterisk for the new numbers and say that  $*1$  ("star one") times  $*1$  was equal to  $-1$ .

However, this was not done. Instead, the symbol,  $i$  (for imaginary") was introduced by the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler in 1777 and was thereafter generally adopted. So we can write  $i = \sqrt{-1}$  or  $i^2 = -1$ .

Having defined  $i$  in this fashion, we can express the square root of any negative number. For instance,  $\sqrt{-4}$  can be written

$\sqrt{4}$  times  $\sqrt{-1}$ , or  $2i$ . In general any square root of a negative number,  $\sqrt{-n}$ , can be written as the square root of the equivalent positive number times the square root of minus one; that is  $\sqrt{-n} = \sqrt{n} i$ .

In this way, we can picture a whole series of imaginary numbers exactly analogous to the series of ordinary or "real numbers." For 1, 2, 3, 4 . . . , we would have  $i$ ,  $2i$ ,  $3i$ ,  $4i$ . . . . This would include fractions, for  $2/3$  would be matched by  $2i/3$ ;  $15/17$  by  $15i/17$  and so on. It would also include irrationals, for  $\sqrt{2}$  would be matched by  $\sqrt{2} i$  and even a number like  $\pi$  (pi) would be matched by  $\pi i$ .

These are all comparisons of positive numbers with imaginary numbers. What about negative numbers? Well, why not negative imaginaries, too? For  $-1$ ,  $-2$ ,  $-3$ ,  $-4$  . . . there would be  $-i$ ,  $-2i$ ,  $-3i$ ,  $-4i$ . . . .

So now we have four classes of numbers, 1) positive real numbers, 2) negative real numbers, 3) positive imaginary numbers, 4) negative imaginary numbers. (When a negative imaginary is multiplied by a negative imaginary, the product is negative.)

Using this further extension of the number system, we can find the necessary two solutions for the equation  $x^2 + 1 = 0$ . They are  $+i$  and  $-i$ . First  $+i$  times  $+i$  equals  $-1$ , and secondly  $-i$  times  $-i$  equals  $-1$ , so that in either case, the equation becomes  $-1 + 1 = 0$ , which is a true equality.

In fact, you can use the same extension of the number system to find all four solutions for an equation such as  $x^4 - 1 = 0$ . The solutions are  $+1$ ,  $-1$ ,  $+i$  and  $-i$ . To show this, we must remember that any number raised to the fourth power is equal to the square of that number multiplied by itself. That is,  $n^4$  equals  $n^2$  times  $n^2$ . Now let's substitute each of the suggested solutions into the equations so that  $x^4$  becomes successively  $(+1)^4$ ,  $(-1)^4$ ,  $(+i)^4$  and  $(-i)^4$ .

First,  $(+1)^4$  equals  $(+1)^2$  times  $(+1)^2$ , and since  $(+1)^2$  equals  $+1$ , that becomes  $+1$  times  $+1$ , which is  $+1$ .

Second,  $(-1)^4$  equals  $(-1)^2$  times  $(-1)^2$  and since  $(-1)^2$  also equals  $+1$ , the expression is again  $+1$  times  $+1$ , or  $+1$ .

Third,  $(+i)^4$  equals  $(+i)^2$  times  $(+i)^2$  and since  $(+i)^2$  equals  $-1$ , the expression becomes  $-1$  times  $-1$  or  $+1$ .

Fourth,  $(-i)^4$  equals  $(-i)^2$  times  $(-i)^2$  which is also  $-1$  times  $-1$ , or  $+1$ .

All four suggested solutions when substituted into the equation,  $x^4 - 1 = 0$ , give the expression  $+1 - 1 = 0$ , which is correct.

It might seem all very well to talk about imaginary numbers—for a mathematician. As long as some defined quantity can be made subject to rules of manipulation that do not contradict anything else in the mathematical system, the mathematician is happy. He doesn't really care what it "means."

Ordinary people do, though, and that's where my sociologist's charge of mysticism against mathematicians arises.

And yet it is the easiest thing in the world to supply the so-called "imaginary" numbers with a perfectly real and concrete significance. Just imagine a horizontal line crossed by a vertical line and call the point of intersection zero. Now you have four lines radiating out at mutual right angles from that zero point. You can equate those lines with the four kinds of numbers.

If the line radiating out to the right is marked off at equal intervals, the marks can be numbered  $+1, +2, +3, \dots$  and so on for as long as we wish, if we only make the line long enough. Between the markings are all the fractions and irrational numbers. In fact, it can be shown that to every point on such a line there corresponds one and only one positive real number, and for every positive real number there is one and only one point on the line.

The line radiating out to the left can be similarly marked off with the negative real numbers, so that the horizontal line can be considered the "real number axis," including both positives and negatives.

Similarly, the line radiating upward can be marked off with the positive imaginary numbers and the one radiating downward with the negative imaginary numbers. The vertical line is then the imaginary number axis.

Suppose we label the different numbers not by the usual signs and symbols, but by the directions in which the lines point. The rightward line of positive real numbers can be called EAST because that would be its direction of extension on a conventional map. The leftward line of negative real numbers would be WEST, the upward line of positive imaginaries would be NORTH and the downward line of negative imaginaries would be SOUTH.

Now if we agree that  $+1$  times  $+1$  equals  $+1$ , and if we concentrate on the compass signs as I have defined them, we are saying that EAST times EAST equals EAST. Again since  $-1$  times  $-1$  also equals  $+1$ , WEST times WEST equals EAST. Then, since



$+i$  times  $+i$  equals  $-i$ , and so does  $-i$  times  $-i$ , then NORTH times NORTH equals WEST and so does SOUTH times SOUTH.

We can also make other combinations such as  $-1$  times  $+i$ , which equals  $-i$  (since positive times negative yields a negative product even when imaginaries are involved) so that WEST times NORTH equals SOUTH. If we list all the possible combinations as compass points, abbreviating those points by initial letters, we can set up the following system:

$E \times E = E$	$E \times S = S$	$E \times W = W$	$E \times N = N$
$S \times E = S$	$S \times S = W$	$S \times W = N$	$S \times N = E$
$W \times E = W$	$W \times S = N$	$W \times W = E$	$W \times N = S$
$N \times E = N$	$N \times S = E$	$N \times W = S$	$N \times N = W$

There is a very orderly pattern here. Any compass point multiplied by EAST is left unchanged, so that EAST as a multiplier represents a rotation of  $0^\circ$ . On the other hand, any compass point multiplied by WEST is rotated through  $180^\circ$  ("about-face"). NORTH and SOUTH represent right-angle turns. Multiplication by SOUTH results in a  $90^\circ$  clockwise turn ("right-face"); while multiplication by NORTH results in a  $90^\circ$  counter-clockwise turn ("left-face").

Now it so happens that an unchanging direction is the simplest arrangement, so EAST (the positive real numbers) are easier to handle and more comforting to the soul than any of the others. WEST, (the negative real numbers) which produces an about face, but leaves one on the same line at least, is less comforting, but not too bad. NORTH and SOUTH (the imaginary numbers) which send you off in a new direction altogether are least comfortable.

But viewed as compass points, you can see that no set of numbers is more "imaginary" or more "real" than any other.

Now consider how useful the existence of two number axes can be. As long as we deal with real numbers only, we can move along the real number axis, backward and forward, one-dimensionally. The same would be true if we use only the imaginary number axis.

Using both, we can define a point as so far right or left on the real number axis and so far up or down on the imaginary number axis. This will place the point somewhere in one of the quadrants formed by the two axes. This is analogous to the manner

in which points are located on the earth's surface by means of latitude and longitude.

We can speak of a number such as  $+5 + 5i$ , which would represent the point reached when you marked off 5 units EAST followed by 5 units NORTH. Or you can have  $-7 + 6i$  or  $+0.5432 - 9.115i$  or  $\sqrt{2} + \sqrt{3}i$ .

Such numbers, combining real and imaginary units are called "complex numbers."

Using both axes, any point in a plane (and not merely on a line) can be made to correspond to one and only one complex number. Again every conceivable complex number can be made to correspond to one and only one point on a plane.

In fact, the real numbers themselves are only special cases of the complex numbers and so, for that matter, are the imaginary numbers. If you represent complex numbers as all numbers of the form  $+a + bi$ , then the real numbers are all those complex numbers in which  $b$  happens to be equal to zero. And imaginary numbers are all the complex numbers in which  $a$  happens to be equal to zero.

The use of the plane of complex numbers, instead of the lines of real numbers only, has been of inestimable use to the mathematician.

For instance, the fundamental theorem of algebra holds true only if complex numbers are considered as solutions, rather than merely real numbers and imaginary numbers. For instance the two solutions of  $x^2 - 1 = 0$  are  $+1$  and  $-1$ , which can be written as  $+1 + 0i$  and  $-1 + 0i$ . The two solutions of  $x^2 + 1 = 0$  are  $+i$  and  $-i$ , or  $0 + i$  and  $0 - i$ . The four solutions of  $x^4 - 1 = 0$  are all four complex numbers just listed.

In all these very simple cases, the complex numbers contain zeroes and boil down to either real numbers or to imaginary numbers. This, nevertheless, is not always so. In the equation,  $x^3 - 1 = 0$ , one solution, to be sure is  $+1 + 0i$  (which can be written simply as  $+1$ ) but the other two solutions, however, are  $-\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{3}i$  and  $-\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{3}i$ .

The Gentle Reader with ambition can take the cube of either of these expressions (if he remembers how to multiply polynomials algebraically) and satisfy himself that it will come out  $+1$ .

Complex numbers are of practical importance too. Many fa-

miliar measurements involve "scalar quantities" which differ only in magnitude. One volume is greater or less than another; one weight is greater or less than another; one density is greater or less than another. For that matter, one debt is greater or less than another. For all such measurements, the real numbers, either positive or negative, suffice.

However, there are also "vector quantities" which possess both magnitude and direction. A velocity may differ from another velocity not only in being greater or less, but in being in another direction. This holds true for forces, accelerations and so on.

For such vector quantities, complex numbers are necessary to the mathematical treatment, since complex numbers include both magnitude and direction (which was my reason for making the analogy between the four types of numbers and the compass points.)

Now when my sociology professor demanded "the square root of minus one pieces of chalk" he was speaking of a scalar phenomenon for which the real numbers were sufficient.

On the other hand, had he asked me how to get from his room to a certain spot on the campus, he would probably have been angered if I had said, "Go 200 yards." He would have asked, with asperity, "In which direction?"

Now, you see, he would be dealing with a vector quantity for which the real numbers are insufficient. I would satisfy him by saying, "Go 200 yards northeast," which is equivalent to saying, "Go 200 plus  $200i$  yards."

Surely it is as ridiculous to consider the square root of minus one "imaginary" because you can't use it to count pieces of chalk as to consider the number 200 as "imaginary" because by itself it cannot express the location of one point with reference to another.



# BOOKS



LAST MONTH WE COMPLAINED rather bitterly about the poor quality of contemporary science fiction and its authors. Although we were careful to point out that there were exceptions to our attack, we fear that angry fans may have overlooked this. So we would like to take advantage of this month's All Star Issue by putting together a composite All Star Author out of the colleagues we admire most. Unfortunately, space limits us to a selection of seven, but we beg you (and the authors who must be omitted) to remember that our admiration includes far more than that number.

Big Daddy of them all is the Old Pro, Robert A. Heinlein. Mr. Heinlein brings to his stories an attack and a pace that have the onslaught of an avalanche. His characters do not vary much . . . he seems to draw on a limited cast . . . but they are delineated with vigor. His blacks are ebony, his whites are pristine, he doesn't waste time on delicate shadings. His themes are similarly forthright, and often give the impression that his stories are being told

by extrapolated bankers and engineers; that is to say, by men who are both pragmatic and parochial.

We have always thought of Mr. Heinlein as the Kipling of science fiction. This is high praise, for Kipling was the finest prose craftsman of the XIXth and early XXth centuries. Unfortunately, Mr. Heinlein also shares Kipling's annoying faults. Kipling's appraisal of life was often oversimplified to the point of childishness. He suffered from acute Xenophobia, and his excessive virility colored most of his work with a cocksure, know-it-all attitude.

Despite these flaws, Mr. Heinlein remains the most powerful and original force in science fiction today; an author always to be reckoned with, never ignored. In fact, the latter would be quite impossible. Mr. Heinlein reaches out, takes the reader by the scruff of the neck, and doesn't let go until he's shaken the wits out of him. Some day we hope Mr. Heinlein will use his talent to shake a little wit into the reader.

Although there has been a falling off in the quality of Theodore

Sturgeon's work in recent years (no doubt the result of middle-aged spread, which can be cured by a stringent physical and mental regimen) he is still the most perceptive, the most sensitive, and the most adult of science fiction authors.

No one in the field can touch on the emotional relationships of human beings as delicately and yet as sharply as Mr. Sturgeon. If Mr. Heinlein's work can be described as massive black and white lithography, then Mr. Sturgeon's is the exquisite Japanese print. He turns every reader into a sympathetic psychoanalyst, but never permits his characters to become analysands; they remain understandably yet mysteriously human.

Mr. Sturgeon comes closest to the ideal science-fiction author because he is not preoccupied with the gadgetry of science; he prefers to extrapolate the human being rather than the test tube. This trips him up occasionally, for sometimes he becomes so involved with the nuances of behaviour that he bogs down, and the action of his story is forced to mark time. But despite this he is a superb craftsman, and when his material lies just right, he invariably produces a gem.

Robert Sheckley is possibly the most polished of the science fiction authors. This manifests itself in his approach to a story; with the

choice of a dozen different treatments, he always selects the wittiest and most original. His ideas are engaging; his dialogue is crisp and pointed with humor. He understands the secret of economy, and knows how to distill an idea down to essentials, and then extract every possible variation and development.

Mr. Sheckley, however, runs a grave risk of becoming monotonous. Early success with a particular story pattern has, we feel, seduced him into repeating this pattern over and over again. He confronts one or two characters with a fantastic and fascinating problem. In the end, the protagonists solve the problem, almost invariably with an ingenious surprise.

This is to say that most of his stories resolve themselves into running duologues. We look forward to the time when Mr. Sheckley will break away from this formula and try his hand at other story forms. His talent is too keen to be wasted entirely on success.

James Blish, to our mind, represents the greatness and the weakness of contemporary science fiction. Mr. Blish is a dedicated craftsman with a deep philosophic bias. He's a dispassionate theoretician at heart, and this is his strength. His weakness lies in the fact that he finds theories dramatic in themselves, and cares less about

the drama of the human beings involved with them.

This, we believe, is an aspect of youth . . . youth which is so fascinated by the enigmas of the physical universe that it has little time left over for concern about the inhabitants. But those of us who are older have played with the physical mysteries and speculated about them; now we've become aware of one of the most amazing mysteries of all . . . man, and we want to know more about him. Here, Mr. Blish and science fiction let us down.

But in all fairness we should point out that young fans often confide that they prefer their science fiction pure; that is, with a minimum of human characters in it. So, while Mr. Blish may occasionally fail to satisfy his older readers, he has generations of young enthusiasts, presently struggling through primers, who will graduate into ardent devotees of his work.

It is the misfortune of Isaac Asimov that his greatest story was his first; and that was a classic which any of us would have been proud to have written. Ever since, Mr. Asimov has turned out a steady stream of science fiction, all competently planned and worked out, very little inspired. He has not grown in stature; he's levelled off into the solid wheel-horse of science fiction.

There is a coldness about Mr. Asimov's work that must be distinguished from the icy clarity of Mr. Blish's. Whereas Mr. Blish deliberately sets his limits, and uses his characters to illustrate his theories, Mr. Asimov is cold out of a lack of a sense of drama. He has tremendous enthusiasm, but seems to lack empathy. He is not a real fiction writer.

Proof of this is the fact that Mr. Asimov is superb in his science articles. When his material does not require life to be breathed into characters, his wit, wisdom, and enthusiasm, plus his wonderfully lucid organization produce fact pieces that are a joy to read, and are often far more entertaining than the works of fiction in the same magazine. After all, fiction is only one of many forms of writing, and it may well be that Mr. Asimov is an essayist who has finally found his way.

Writers are a lazy lot; we write what is convenient, comfortable, and profitable. We are past masters of the art of rationalizing cowardice. When we are inspired by a theme which may trigger off a family feud (if we express ourselves frankly and honestly) we can always find a valid excuse for evading the issue. If we catch hold of an idea which requires rigorous speculation to bring it to maturity, we can improvise a dozen devices to dodge the work. All this is by

way of paying homage to that most courageous of science fiction authors, Phillip José Farmer.

Extrapolation is an ideal which science fiction extolls but rarely practices in depth. Mr. Farmer is possibly the only author who genuinely, with discipline, extrapolates. He is the one man capable of pursuing an idea to its logical end, no matter what the conclusion may involve; and it is Mr. Farmer's greatness that he is unafraid of the most repellent conclusions.

We spoke before of Robert Heinlein's virility. In the light of Mr. Farmer's courage, Mr. Heinlein's aggressiveness becomes mere belligerence. Mr. Heinlein often dares to advocate a reactionary point of view in the face of a progressive milieu, and this is often taken as a sign of courage. We argue that it is merely hopping on an unpopular bandwagon. Mr. Farmer's is the true courage, for he has the strength to project into the dark where no pre-formed attitudes wait to support him. In other words, Mr. Heinlein deliberately shocks for the sake of dramatic values; Mr. Farmer often shocks because he has had the courage to extrapolate a harmless idea to its terrible conclusion.

Mr. Farmer's weakness is the fact that he is not a genius. (This department knows only too well what an absurd yet agonizing comment that is.) Neither he nor any

author writing today is capable of smelting his powerful extrapolations into a bigger-than-life story. To quote an old expression: Mr. Farmer has too much engine for his rear axle. We believe the same is true of most science fiction.

We will never forget the electrifying effect of the first stories of Ray Bradbury. They swept over science fiction a generation ago, and transformed it from gadgetry into art. This must not be taken as a denigration of the gadgetry of the times which was, indeed, of amazing ingenuity and power. In those days almost every story was an eye-opener; but Mr. Bradbury opened our eyes to new vistas.

His theme is protest; the protest of man against the tools which will enable him to control his environment, but which threaten to destroy man himself. To put it another way, Mr. Bradbury is for the simple life. He does not balk at the big issues; rather, he seizes upon a very small point . . . the right to take a walk in the rain, the right to read a book . . . and develops it with masterly style into a telling incident.

Incident, not drama, is Mr. Bradbury's forte; incident and exquisite tone control. If Theodore Sturgeon's work is the Japanese print, then Mr. Bradbury's may be likened to that most difficult of art forms, the watercolor. It is the crux of the watercolor that the

tints must be of transparent purity, and flowed on with a courageous full brush. This is the essence of Mr. Bradbury's art.

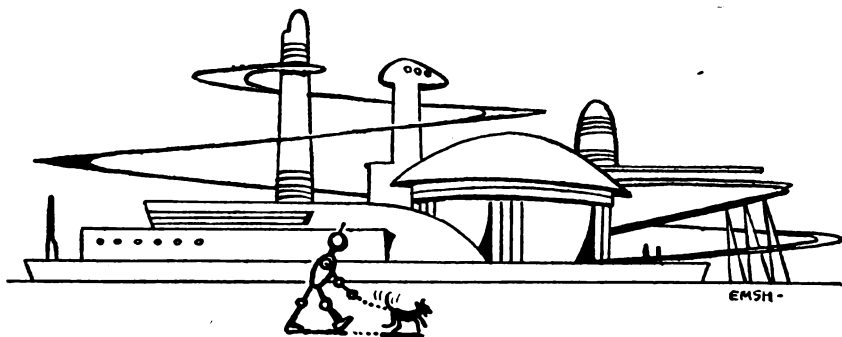
It is also the danger of Mr. Bradbury's art, for it is so special in its perfection that a very little goes a long way. Mr. Bradbury cannot be read too often. When he is collected in one volume it is virtually impossible to read all his stories in a single sitting. One becomes quickly surfeited with the subtle nuance, and begins to require more robust fare.

There are many more fine practicing craftsmen whom space will not permit us to discuss: Brian Aldiss, Algis Budrys, Arthur Clarke, Damon Knight, Fritz Leiber, and others. Each makes a vital contribution to science fiction;

all are colleagues whom we are proud to admire. But we must limit ourselves to the seven artists under consideration here.

Our All Star Author, then, would be made up of the dramatic virility of Robert Heinlein, the humanity of Theodore Sturgeon, the gloss of Robert Sheckley, the dispassion of James Blish, the encyclopaedic enthusiasm of Isaac Asimov, the courage of Phillip Farmer, and the high style of Ray Bradbury. He would be edited with the technical acumen of John W. Campbell, Jr., the psychoanalytic perception of Horace Gold, and the sparkling sophistication of the Boucher-McComas team. And publishers would beat a pathway to his door.

—Alfred Bester





*In "A Few Miles" (F&SF, Oct. 1960), Philip José Farmer told of John Carmody—adventurer-turned-monk—and a minor misadventure in a local zoo with an imported horowitz. The great bird, in fact, laid an egg on our friend John—an egg which attached itself to John's chest. In the present adventure, John goes to Feral, planet of the horowitzes, to see what can be done about that egg . . . .*

# PROMETHEUS

*by Philip José Farmer*

THE MAN WITH THE EGG GROWING on his chest stepped out of the spaceship.

In the light of dawn the veldt of Feral looked superficially like an African plain before the coming of the white man. It was covered with a foot-high brown grass. Here and there were tall thick-trunked trees standing alone or in groves of from five to thirty. Everywhere were herds of animals. These were cropping the grass or else drinking from a waterhole a quarter of a mile away. At this distance, some resembled antelopes, gnus, giraffes, pigs, and elephants. There were other creatures that looked as if they had come out of Earth's Pliocene. And others that had no Terrestrial parallels.

"No mammals," said a voice behind the man with the egg at-

tached to his chest. "They're warm-blooded descendants of reptiles. But not mammals."

The speaker walked around John Carmody. He was Doctor Holmyard, sapientologist, zoologist, chief of the expedition. A tall man of about sixty with a lean body and leaner face and brown hair that had once been a bright red.

"The two previous studies established that mammals either never developed or were wiped out early. Apparently, the reptiles and birds jumped the gun in the evolutionary race. But they have filled the ecological niche the mammals occupied on Earth."

Carmody was a short rolypoly man with a big head and a long sharp nose. His left eye had a lid that tended to droop. Before he

had gotten off the ship he had been wearing a monk's robe.

Holmyard pointed at a clump of trees due north and a mile away. "There is your future home until the egg hatches," he said. "And, if you want to stay after that, we'll be very happy."

He gestured at two men who had followed him out of the ship, and they approached Carmody. They removed his kilt and fastened a transparent belt around his protruding stomach. Then they attached it to a sporran of feathers, barred red and white. Over his shaven head went a wig with a tall crest of red and white feathers. Next, a false beak edged with teeth was fitted over his nose. His mouth, however, was left free. Then, a bustle from which projected a tail of red and white plumage was fitted to the belt.

Holmyard walked around Carmody. He shook his head. "These birds—if they are birds—won't be fooled one bit when they get a close look at you. On the other hand, your general silhouette is convincing enough to allow you to get fairly close to them before they decide you're a fake. By then, they may be curious enough to permit you to join them."

"And if they attack?" said Carmody. Despite the seriousness of what might happen, he was grinning. He felt such a fool, toggled out like a man going to a masquerade party as a big rooster.

"We've already implanted the mike into your throat," said Holmyard. "The transceiver is flat, fitted to curve with your skull. You can holler for help, and we'll come running. Don't forget to turn the transceiver off when you're not using it. The charge won't last for more than fifty operational hours. But you can renew the charge at the cache."

"And you'll move camp to a place five miles due south of here?" said Carmody. "Then the ship takes off?"

"Yes. Don't forget. If—after—you've established yourself, come back to the cache and get the cameras. You can put them in the best locations for taking films of the horowitzes."

"I like that if," said Carmody. He looked across the plains at his destination, then shook hands with the others.

"God be with you," said the little monk.

"And with you, too," said Holmyard, warmly pumping his hand. "You're doing a great service for science, John. Perhaps for mankind. And for the horowitzes, too. Don't forget what I've told you."

"Among my many failings, a bad memory is not numbered," said John Carmody. He turned and began walking off across the veldt. A few minutes later, the great vessel lifted silently to a height of twenty feet, then shot off towards the south.

A lonely little man, ridiculous in his borrowed feathers, looking less like a man than a rooster that had lost a fight, and feeling like one at the moment, John Carmody set off through the grass. He was wearing transparent shoes, so the occasional rocks he stepped on did not hurt his feet.

A herd of equine creatures stopped feeding to look at him, to sniff the air. They were about the size of zebras and were completely hairless, having a smooth yellowish skin mottled with squares of a pale red. Lacking tails, they had no weapons of defense against the flies that swarmed around them, but their long nonreptilian tongues slid out and licked the flies off each other's flanks. They gave horsy snorts and whinnied. After watching Carmody for about sixty seconds, they suddenly broke and fled to a position about a hundred yards away. Then, they wheeled almost as a unit and faced him again. He decided that it must be his strange odor that had spooked them, and he hoped that the horowitzes would not also be offended.

At that moment, he was beginning to think that he had been foolish to volunteer for this job. Especially, when a huge creature, lacking only long tusks to resemble an elephant, lifted its trunk and trumpeted at him. However, the creature immediately began pulling down fruit from a tree

and paid no more attention to him.

Carmody walked on, not without many sidewise glances to make sure it was keeping its air of indifference. By now, however, his characteristic optimism had reasserted itself. And he was telling himself that he had been guided to this planet for a very definite purpose. What the purpose was, he didn't know. But he was certain of Who had sent him.

The chain of events that had dragged him here was made of too strange a series of links to be only coincidences. Or so, at least, he believed. Only a month ago he had been fairly happy to be a simple monk working in the garden of the monastery of the Order of St. Jairus in the city of Fourth of July, Arizona, North American Department. Then, his abbot had told him that he was to transfer to a parish on the planet of Wildenwooly. And his troubles had begun.

First, he was given no money with which to buy a ticket for passage on a spaceship, no letters of introduction or identification or any detailed orders at all. He was just told to leave at once. He did not even have enough money to buy a bus ticket which would take him to the spaceport outside the domed city. He began walking and, as seemed to be his fate wherever he was, he got into one trouble after another. He finally found himself in the city park, where he

was thrown by a hoodlum into a moat in the city zoo. Here a female horowitz, a giant bird of the planet Feral, had leaped into the moat and, holding him down with one foot, proceeded to lay her egg on his chest. Later, Carmody had escaped from the moat, only to find that the egg had put out tendrils of flesh and attached itself permanently to his chest.

When the zoo authorities located Carmody, they told him that the female horowitz, when she had no available male or other female on whom to attach her eggs, would attach it to a host animal. Carmody had been unlucky enough—or, from the viewpoint of the zoologists, lucky enough—to be a host. Lucky because now they would have an opportunity to study closely the development of the embryo in the egg and the manner in which it drew sustenance from its host. Moreover, if Carmody would go to Feral and attempt to pass as a horowitz, he would be the means for furnishing the zoologists with invaluable data about these birds. The zoologists believed the horowitzes to be the Galaxy's most intelligent non-sentient beings. There was even speculation they might be advanced enough to have a language. Would Carmody work with the zoologists if they paid for his trip to Wildenwooly after the study was made?

So, the lonely little man walked

across the veldt with a leathery-skinned egg attached to his bloodstream. He was filled with apprehension which even his prayers did little to still.

Flocks of thousands of birds flew overhead. A creature large as an elephant, but with a long neck and four knobbly horns on its muzzle, browsed off the leaves of a tree. It paid no attention to him, so Carmody did not veer away but walked in a straight line which took him only fifty yards from it.

Then, out of a tall clump of grass stepped an animal which he knew at once was one of the great carnivores. It was lion-colored, lion-sized, and was built much like a lion. However it was hairless. Its feline face wrinkled in a silent snarl. Carmody stopped and made a half-turn to face it. His hand slid among his tailfeathers and closed around the butt of the gun hidden there.

He had been warned about this type of meat-eater.

"Only if they're very hungry or too old to catch fleeter prey will they attack you," Holmyard had said.

This creature didn't look old, and its sides were sleek. But Carmody-thought that if its temperament was as catlike as its looks, it might attack just because it was annoyed.

The leonoid blinked at him and yawned. Carmody began to breathe a trifle easier. The crea-

ture sat down on its haunches and gazed at him for all the world like a curious, but oversize, pussycat. Slowly, Carmody edged away.

The leonoid made no move to follow. Carmody was congratulating himself, when, on his left, a creature burst loose from a clump of grass.

He saw that it was a half-grown horowitz, but he had no more time to look at it. The leonoid, as startled as Carmody, leaped forward in pursuit of the runner. The horowitz cried in fear. The leonoid roared. Its pace increased.

Suddenly, out of the same clump from which the young bird had run, an adult darted. This one held a club in its hand. Though it was no match for the carnivore, it ran towards it, waving its club in its humanlike hand and yelling.

By then Carmody had drawn the pistol from its holster, and he directed the stream of bullets at the leonoid. The first missile exploded in the ground a few feet ahead of the creature; the remainder raked its side. Over and over the animal turned, and then it fell.

The adult horowitz dropped the club, scooped up the young bird in its arms, and began running towards the grove of trees about a half a mile ahead, its home.

Carmody shrugged, reloaded the gun, and resumed his walk.

"Perhaps, I can put this incident to good use," he said aloud to

himself. "If they are capable of gratitude, I should be received with open arms. On the other hand, they may fear me so much they might launch a mass attack. Well, we shall see."

By the time he had neared the grove, the branches of the trees were alive with the females and the young. And the males had gathered to make a stand outside the grove. One, evidently a leader, stood ahead of the group. Carmody was not sure, but he thought that this was the one who had run with the child.

The leader was armed with a stick. He walked stiff-leggedly and slowly towards him. Carmody stopped and began talking. The leader also stopped and bent his head to one side to listen in a very birdlike gesture. He was like the rest of his species, though larger—almost seven feet tall. His feet were three-toed, his legs thick to bear his weight, his body superficially like an ostrich's. But he had no wings, rudimentary or otherwise. He had well-developed arms and five-fingered hands, though the fingers were much longer in proportion than a man's. His neck was thick, and the head was large with a well-developed braincase. The brown eyes were set in the front of his broad head like a man's; the corvine beak was small, lined with sharp teeth, and black. His body was naked of plumage

except for red-and-white-barred feathers in the loin region, on the back, and on the head. There a tall crest of feathers bristled, and around his ears were stiff feathers, like a horned owl's, designed to focus sound.

Carmody listened for a minute to the sounds of the leader's voice and those behind him. He could make out no definite pattern of speech, no distinguishing rhythm, no repetition of words. Yet, they were uttering definite syllables, and there was something familiar about their speaking.

After a minute, he recognized its similarity, and he was startled. They were talking like a baby when he is at the stage of babbling. They were running the scale of potential phonemes, up and down, at random, sometimes repeating, more often not.

Carmody reached up slowly to his scalp so he wouldn't alarm them with a sudden movement. He slid the panel-switch on the skull-fitting transceiver under his crest, thus allowing the zoologists at the camp to tune in.

Carmody spoke in a low tone, knowing that the microphone implanted in his throat would clearly reproduce his voice to the listeners at the camp. He described his situation and then said, "I'm going to walk into their home. If you hear a loud crack, it'll be a club breaking my skull. Or vice versa."

He began walking, not directly

towards the leader but to one side. The big horowitz turned as the man went by, but he made no threatening move with his club. Carmody went on by, though he felt his back prickle when he could no longer see the leader. Then he had walked straight at the mob, and he saw them step to one side, their heads cocked to one side, their sharp-toothed bills emitting the infantile babblings.

He passed safely through them to the middle of the grove of cottonwoodlike trees. Here the females and young looked down at him. The females resembled the males in many respects, but they were smaller and their crests were brown. Almost all of them were carrying eggs on their chests or else held the very young in their arms. These were covered from head to thigh with a golden-brown chicklike fuzz. The older children, however, had lost the down. The female adults looked as puzzled as the males, but the children seemed to have only curiosity. The older children climbed out on the branches above him and looked down at him. And they, too, babbled like babies.

Presently, a half-grown horowitz, a female by her all-brown crest, climbed down and slowly approached him. Carmody reached into the pouch in his tail feathers, and he brought out a lump of sugar. This he tasted himself to show her it wasn't pois-

onous, and then he held it out in his hand and made coaxing sounds. The young girl—he was already thinking of these beings as human—snatched the cube from his hand and ran back to the trunk of the tree. Here she turned the sugar lump over and over, felt its texture with the tips of her fingers, and then barely touched the cube with the tip of her long broad tongue.

She looked pleased. This surprised Carmody, for he had not thought of the possibility that humanoid expressions could take place on such an avian face. But the face was broad and flat and well-equipped with muscles and able as a man's to depict emotion.

The girl put all of the cube in her bill, and she looked ecstatic. Then she turned to the big horowitz—who had neared the two—and uttered a series of syllables. There was evident pleasure in her voice.

Carmody held out another lump of sugar to the leader, who took it and popped it into his bill. And over his face spread pleasure.

Carmody spoke out loud for the benefit of the men in the camp. "Put a good supply of sugar in the cache," he said, "plus some salt. I think it's likely that these people may be salt-starved, too."

"People!" exploded the ghostly voice in his ear. "Carmody, don't start making anthropocentric errors regarding these creatures."

"You've not met them," said Carmody. "Perhaps you could maintain a zoologist's detachment. But I can't. Human is as human does."

"O.K., John. But when you report, just give a description, and never mind your interpretations. After all, I'm human, and, therefore, open to suggestion."

Carmody grinned and said, "O.K. Oh, they're starting to dance now. I don't know what the dance means, whether it's something instinctive or something they've created."

While Carmody had been talking, the females and the young had climbed down out of the trees. They formed a semicircle and began clapping their hands together in rhythm. The males had gathered before them and were now hopping, jumping, spinning, bowing, waddling bent-kneed like ducks. They gave weird cries and occasionally flapped their arms and leaped into the air as if simulating the flight of birds. After about five minutes, the dance suddenly ceased, and the horowitzes formed a single-file line. Their leader, at the head of the line, walked towards Carmody.

"Oh, oh," said Carmody. "I think we're seeing the formation of the first breadline in the non-history of these people. Only it's sugar, not bread, that they want."

"How many are there?" said Holmyard.

"About twenty-five."

"Got enough sugar?"

"Only if I break up the cubes and give each a slight taste."

"Try that, John. While you're doing that, we'll rush more sugar to the cache on a jeep. Then you can lead them there after we leave."

"Maybe I'll take them there. Just now I'm worried about their reaction if they don't get a complete lump."

He began to break up the cubes into very small pieces and to put one into each extended hand. Every time, he said, "Sugar." By the time the last one in line—a mother with a fuzzy infant in her arms—had stuck out her hand, he had only one fragment left.

"It's a miracle," he said, sighing with relief. "Came out just right. They've gone back to what I presume are their normal occupations. Except for their chief and some of the children. These, as you can hear, are babbling like mad at me."

"We're recording their sounds," said Holmyard. "We'll make an attempt to analyze them later, find out if they've a speech."

"I know you have to be scientific," replied Carmody. "But I have a very perceptive ear, like all people who run off at the mouth, and I can tell you now they don't have a language. Not in the sense we think of, anyway."

A few minutes later, he said,

"Correction. They at least have the beginning of a language. One of the little girls just came up and held out her hand and said, 'Sugar.' Perfect reproduction of English speech, if you ignore the fact that it couldn't have come from a human mouth. Sounded like a parrot or crow."

"I heard her! That's significant as hell, Carmody! If she could make the correlation so quickly, she must be capable of symbolic thinking." He added, in a more moderate tone, "Unless it was accidental, of course."

"No accident. Did you hear the other child also ask for it?"

"Faintly. While you're observing them, try to give them a few more words to learn."

Carmody sat down at the base of a thick tree trunk in the shade of branches, for the sun was beginning to turn the air hot. The tree had thick corrugated bark like a cottonwood, but it bore fruit. This grew high up on the branches and looked from a distance like a banana. The young girl brought him one and held it out to him, saying at the same time, "Sugar?"

Carmody wanted to taste the fruit, but he didn't think it would be fair to receive it without giving her what she wanted. He shook his head no, though he didn't expect her to interpret the gesture. She cocked her head to one side, and her face registered disappoint-



ment. Nevertheless, she did not withdraw the fruit. And, after making sure she knew he was out of sugar, he took the gift. The shell had to be rapped against the side of the tree to be broken, and it came apart in the middle, where it creased. He took a small bite from the interior and reported to Holmyard that it tasted like a combination of apple and cherry.

"They not only feed on this fruit," he said. "They're eating the tender shoots of a plant that resembles bamboo. I also saw one catch and eat a small rodentlike animal which ran out from under a rock she turned over. And they pick lice off each other and eat insects they find around the roots of the grass. I saw one try to catch a bird that was eating the bamboo shoots.

"Oh, the leader is pounding a club on the ground. They're dropping whatever they're doing and clustering around him. Looks as if they're getting ready to go some place. The females and young are forming a group. The males, all armed with clubs, are surrounding them. I think I'll join them."

Their destination, he was to find out, was a waterhole about a mile and a half away. It was a shallow depression about twenty feet across filled with muddy water. There were animals gathered about it: gazellelike creatures, a giant porcine with armor like an armadillo, several birds that

seemed at first glance and far off to be horowitzes. But when Carmody got closer, he saw they were only about two and a half feet high, their arms were much longer, and their foreheads slanted back. Perhaps, these filled the ecological niche here that monkeys did on Earth.

The animals fled at the approach of the horowitzes. These established guards, one at each cardinal point of the compass, and the rest drank their fill. The young jumped into the water and splashed around, throwing water in each other's face and screaming with delight. Then they were hauled out, protesting, by their mothers. The guards drank their fill, and the group prepared to march back to their home, the grove.

Carmody was thirsty, but he didn't like the looks or odor of the water, which smelled as if something had died in it. He looked around and saw that the dozen trees around the waterhole were a different type. These were fifty-foot high slim plants with a smooth lightbrown bark and only a few branches, which grew near the top. Clusters of gourds also grew among the branches. At the bottom of the trees lay empty gourds. He picked up one, broke in the narrow end, and dipped it in the water. Then he dropped in the water an antibiotic pill which he took from the bustle under his

tailfeathers. He drank, making a face at the taste. The young girl who had first asked him for sugar approached, and he showed her how to drink from the gourd. She laughed a quite human-sounding laugh and poured the water down her open beak.

Carmody took advantage of the curiosity of the others to show them that they, too, could fill their gourds and transport water back to the grove.

Thus, the first artifact was invented—or given—on Feral. In a short time, everyone had gourds and filled them. And the group, babbling like babies, began the march back to home.

"I don't know if they're intelligent enough to learn a language yet," said Carmody to Holmyard. "It seems to me that if they were, they'd have created one. But they are the most intelligent animal I've yet encountered. Far superior to the chimpanzee or porpoise. Unless they just have a remarkable mimetic ability."

"We've run off samples of their speech in the analyzer," said Holmyard. "And there's no distribution to indicate a well-organized language. Or even an incipient language."

"I'll tell you one thing," replied Carmody. "They at least have identifying sounds for each other. I've noticed that when they want the leader's attention, they say, 'Whoot!', and he responds. Also,

this girl who asked for sugar responds to the call of Tutu. So, I'm identifying them as such."

The rest of the day Carmody spent observing the horowitzes and reporting to Holmyard. He said that, during times of danger or during a joint undertaking such as going for water, the group acted as a whole. But most of the time they seemed to operate in small family units. The average family consisted of a male, the children, and anywhere from one to three females. Most of the females had eggs attached to their chests or bellies. He was able to settle for Holmyard the question of whether, generally, the females laid their eggs on each other, and so raised fosterfamilies, or transferred the eggs to their own skin immediately after laying. Towards dusk he saw a female deposit an egg and then hold it against the chest of another female. In a few minutes, little tendrils crept forth from the leathery-skinned ovum and inserted themselves into the bloodstream of the hostess.

"That, I would take it, is the general course of action," Carmody said. "But there is one male here who, like me, carries an egg. I don't know why he was singled out. But I would say that, at the time the egg was produced, the female and her mate were separated from the others. So the female took the lesser alternative. Don't ask me why the females just

don't attach the eggs to their own bodies. Maybe there's a chemical factor that prevents the egg from attaching itself to its own mother. Perhaps some sort of antibody set-up. I don't know. But there is some reason which, up to now, only the Creator of the horowitzes knows."

"It's not a general pattern for all the birds of this planet," said Holmyard. "There are oviparous, oviparous, and viviparous species. But the order of birds of which the horowitzes are the highest in development, the order of Aviprimates, all have this feature. From highest to lowest, they lay their eggs and then attach them to a host."

"I wonder why this particular line of creatures didn't develop viviparism?" said Carmody. "It seems obvious that it's the best method for protecting the unborn."

"Who knows?" said Holmyard, and Carmody, mentally, could see him shrugging. "That's a question that may or may not be answered during this study. After all, this planet is new to us. It's not had a thorough study. It was only by a lucky accident that Horowitz discovered these birds during his brief stay here. Or that we were able to get a grant to finance us."

"One reason for this externalism may be that even if the embryo is injured or killed, the hostess is not," said Carmody. "If the embryo of a viviparous mother is destroyed, then the mother usually

is, too. But here, I imagine, though the embryo may be more susceptible to death and injury, the bearer of the unborn is relatively unaffected by the wound."

"Maybe," said Holmyard. "Nature is an experimenter. Perhaps, she's trying this method on this planet."

*He is, you mean,* thought Carmody, but he said nothing. The gender of the Creator did not matter. Both he and the zoologist were talking about the same entity.

Carmody continued to give his observations. The mothers fed the very young in the traditional manner of birds, by regurgitating food.

"That seemed probable," said Holmyard. "The reptiles developed a class of warmblooded animals, but none of these have hair or even rudimentary mammaries. The horowitz, as I told you, evolved from a very primitive bird which took up arboreal life at the time its cousins were learning to glide. The fleshy fold of skin hanging down between arm and rib is a vestige of that brief period when it had begun to glide and then changed its mind and decided to become a lemuroid-type.

"Or so it seems to us. Actually, we haven't unearthed enough fossils to speak authoritatively."

"They do have certain cries which can be interpreted by the others. Such as a cry for help, a cry for pick-my-fleas, a rallying cry, and so on. But that's all. Ex-

cept that some of the children now know the word for sugar and water. And they identify each other. Would you say that that is the first step in creating a language?"

"No, I wouldn't," said Holmyard firmly. "But if you can teach them to take an assemblage of independent words and string them together into an intelligible sentence, and if they become capable of reassembling these words in different patterns and for different situations, then I'd say they are in a definite lingual stage. But your chance for doing that is very remote. After all, they might be in a prelingual stage, just on the verge of becoming capable of verbal symbolism. But it might take another ten thousand years, maybe fifty thousand, before their kind develop that ability. Before they take the step from animal to human being."

"And maybe I can give them the nudge," said Carmody. "Maybe . . ."

"Maybe what?" said Holmyard after Carmody had been silent for several minutes.

"I'm confronted with the theological question the Church raised some centuries before interstellar travel became possible," said Carmody. "At what moment did the ape become a man? At what moment did the ape possess a soul, and . . ."

"Jesus Christ!" said Holmyard. "I know you're a monk, Carmody!

And it's only natural you should be interested in such a question! But, I beg of you, don't start muddling around with something as divorced from reality as the exact moment when a soul is inserted into an animal! Don't let this—this how-many-angels-on-a-pinpoint absurdity begin to color your reports. Please try to keep a strictly objective and scientific viewpoint. Just describe what you see; no more!"

"Take it easy, Doc. That's all I intend to do. But you can't blame me for being interested. However, it's not for me to decide such a question. I leave that up to my superiors. My order, that of St. Jairus, does not do much theological speculation; we are primarily men of action."

"O.K., O.K.," said Holmyard. "Just so we understand each other. Now, do you intend to introduce fire to the horowitzes tonight?"

"Just as soon as dusk falls."

Carmody spent the rest of the day in teaching little Tutu the word for tree, egg, gourd, a few verbs which he acted out for her, and the pronouns. She caught on quickly. He was sure that it was not the purely mimetic speech ability of a parrot. To test her, he asked her a question.

"You see the tree?" he said, pointing at a large sycamore-like fruit tree.

She nodded, a gesture she had

learned from him, and she replied in her strange birdlike voice, "Yes. Tutu see the tree."

Then, before he could frame another question, she said, pointing at the chief, "You see Whoot? Tutu see Whoot. Him horowitz. Me horowitz. You . . . ?"

For a moment Carmody was speechless, and Holmyard's voice screeched thinly, "John, did you hear her? She can speak and understand English! And in such a short time, too! John, these people must have been ready for speech! We gave it to them! We gave it to them!"

Carmody could hear Holmyard's heavy breathing as if the man stood next to him. He said, "Calm down, my good friend. Though I don't blame you for being excited."

Tutu cocked her head to one side and said, "You talk to . . . ?"

"Me a man," said Carmody, replying to her previous question. "Man, man. And me talk to a man . . . not me. The man far away." Then, realizing she didn't know the meaning of the words *far away*, he indicated distance with a sweep of his arm and a finger pointing off across the veldt.

"You talk to . . . a man . . . far away?"

"Yes," said Carmody, wishing to get off that subject. She wasn't ready to understand any explanation he could give her for his ability to communicate across long

distances, so he said, "Me tell you some time . . ." And he stopped again, for he didn't have enough words with which to explain time. That would have to come later.

"Me make fire," he said.

Tutu continued to look puzzled, as she understood only the first word of his sentence. "Me show you," he said, and he proceeded to gather long dried grasses and punk from a dead tree. These he piled together, and then tore off some twigs and smaller dead branches, which he laid by the first pile. By this time many of the children and some of the adults had collected around him.

He pulled from his bustle under the tailfeathers a flint and a piece of iron pyrite. These he had brought from the spaceship because the zoologists had told him this area was poor in both minerals. He showed the two pieces to them and then, after six tries, struck a spark. The spark fell on the grass but did not set fire to it. He tried three more times before a spark took root. In the next few seconds he had enough of a fire going to be able to throw on twigs and then branches.

When the first jet of flame arose, the wide-eyed assembly gasped. But they did not run, as he had feared. Instead, they made sounds which attracted the others. Shortly, the entire tribe was gathered around him.

Tutu, saying, "Au! Au!"—

which Carmody interpreted as a sound of amazement or of delight in beauty—put out her hand to seize the flame. Carmody opened his mouth to say, "No! Fire bad!" But he closed his lips. How to tell her that something could be very harmful and at the same time be a great good?

He looked around and saw that one of the youngsters standing at the back of the crowd was holding a mouse-sized rodent in her hand. So fascinated was she by the fire that she had not yet popped the living animal into her beak. Carmody went to her and pulled her close to the fire, where everybody could see her. Then, not without having to overcome the reluctance of the child with many reassuring gestures, he got her to give him the rodent. Distastefully, he dashed its life out by snapping its head against a rock. He took his knife and skinned and gutted and decapitated the creature. Then he sharpened a long stick and stuck it through the rodent. After which, he took Tutu by her slender elbow and guided her close to the fire. When she felt its intense heat, she drew back. He allowed her to do so, saying, "Fire hot! Burn! Burn!"

She looked at him with wide eyes, and he smiled and patted her feathery top. Then he proceeded to roast the mouse. Afterwards, he cut it in three parts, al-

lowed the bits to cool, and gave one to the girl from whom he had taken the mouse, one to Tutu, and one to the chief. All three gingerly tasted it and at the same time breathed ecstasy, "Ah!"

Carmody didn't get much sleep that night. He kept the fire going while the whole tribe sat around the flames and admired them. Several times, some large animals, attracted by the brightness, came close enough for him to see their eyes glowing. But they made no attempt to get closer.

In the morning, Carmody talked to Holmyard. "At least five of the children are only a step behind Tutu in learning English," he said. "So far, none of the adults has shown any inclination to repeat any of the words. But their habit patterns may be too rigid for them to learn. I don't know. I'll work on the chief and some others today. Oh, yes, when you drop off some ammunition at the cache, would you leave me a holster and ammo belt for my gun? I don't think they'll find it strange. Apparently, they know I'm not a true horowitz. But it doesn't seem to matter to them.

"I'm going to kill an antelope today and show them how to cook meat on a big scale. But they'll be handicapped unless they can find some flint or chert with which to fashion knives. I've been thinking that I ought to lead them to a site

where they can find some. Do you know of any?"

"We'll go out in the jeep and look for some," said Holmyard. "You're right. Even if they are capable of learning to make tools and pottery, they're not in an area suited to develop that ability."

"Why didn't you pick a group which lived near a flint-rich area?"

"Mainly, because it was in this area that Horowitz discovered these creatures. We scientists are just as apt to get into a rut as anybody, so we didn't look into the future. Besides, we had no idea these animals—uh—people, if they do deserve that term—were so full of potential."

Just then Tutu, holding a mouse-sized grasshopper in her hand, came up to Carmody.

"This . . . ?"

"This is a grasshopper," said Carmody.

"You burn . . . the fire."

"Yes. Me burn *in* fire. No, not burn. Me cook *in* fire."

"You cook in the fire," she said. "You give to me. Me eat; you eat."

"She's now learned two prepositions—I think," said Carmody.

"John, why this pidgin English?" said Holmyard. "Why the avoidance of *is* and the substitution of the nominative case for the objective with the personal pronouns?"

"Because *is* isn't necessary," replied Carmody. "Many languages get along without it, as you well

know. Moreover, there's a recent tendency in English to drop it in conversational speech, and I'm just anticipating what may become a general development.

"As for teaching them lower-class English, I'm doing that because I think that the language of the illiterates will triumph. You know how hard the teachers in our schools have to struggle to overcome the tendency of their high-class students to use button-pusher's jargon."

"O.K.," said Holmyard. "It doesn't matter, anyway. The horowitzes have no conception—as far as I know—of the difference. Thank God, you're not teaching them Latin!"

"Say!" said Carmody. "I didn't think of that! Why not? If the horowitzes ever become civilized enough to have interstellar travel, they'd always be able to talk to priests, no matter where they went."

"Carmody!"

Carmody chuckled and said, "Just teasing, Doctor. But I do have a serious proposition. If other groups should show themselves as capable of linguistic learning, why not teach each group a different language? Just as an experiment? This group would be our Indo-European school; another, Sinitic; another, our Amerindian; still another, Bantu. It would be interesting to see how the various groups developed socially, technological-

ly, and philosophically. Would each group follow the general lines of social evolution that their prototypes did on Earth? Would the particular type of language a group used place it on a particular path during its climb uphill to civilization?"

"A tempting idea," said Holmyard. "But I'm against it. Sentient beings have enough barriers to understanding each other without placing the additional obstacles of differing languages in their way. No, I think that all should be taught English. A single speech will give them at least one unifying element. Though, God knows, their tongues will begin splitting into dialects soon enough."

"Bird-English I'll teach them," said Carmody.

One of the first things he had to do was straighten out Tutu concerning the word *tree*. She was teaching some of the younger horowitzes what language she'd mastered so far and was pointing to a cottonwood and calling out, "Tree! Tree!"

Then she pointed to another cottonwood, and she became silent. Wonderingly, she looked at Carmody, and he knew in that moment that she thought of that cottonwood as tree. But that word to her meant an individual entity or thing. She had no generic concept of tree.

Carmody tried by illustration to show her. He pointed at the

second cottonwood and said, "Tree." Then he pointed at one of the tall thin trees and repeated the word.

Tutu cocked her head to one side, and an obvious puzzlement settled on her face.

Carmody further confused her by indicating the two cottonwoods and giving each their name. Then, on the spot, he made up a name for the tall thin trees and said, "Tumtum."

"Tumtum," said Tutu.

"Tumtumtree," said Carmody. He pointed at the cottonwood. "Cottonwoodtree." He pointed out across the veldt. "Thorntree." He made an all-inclusive gesture. "All tree."

The youngsters around Tutu did not seem to grasp his meaning, but she laughed—as a crow laughs—and said, "Tumtum. Cottonwood. Thorn. All tree."

Carmody wasn't sure whether she grasped what he'd said or was just mimicking him. Then she said, swiftly—perhaps she was able to interpret his look of frustration—"Tumtumtree. Cottonwoodtree. Thorntree."

She held up three fingers and made a sweeping gesture with the other hand. "All tree."

Carmody was pleased, for he was fairly certain she now knew tree as not only an individual but a generic term. But he didn't know how to tell her that the last-named was not a thorn but was a



thorntree. He decided that it didn't matter. Not for the time being, at least. But when the time came to name a thorn as such, he would have to give the thorn another nomenclature. No use confusing them.

"You seem to be doing famously," said Holmyard's voice. "What's next on the agenda?"

"I'm going to try to sneak away to the cache and pick up some more ammo and sugar," said Carmody. "Before I do, could you drop off a blackboard and some paper and pencils?"

"You won't have to take notes," said Holmyard. "Everything you say is being recorded, as I think I once told you," he added impatiently.

"I'm not thinking of making memos," said Carmody. "I intend to start teaching them how to read and write."

There was a silence for several seconds, then, "What?"

"Why not?" replied Carmody. "Even at this point, I'm not absolutely certain they really understand speech. Ninety-nine per cent sure, yes. But I want to be one-hundred per cent certain. And if they can understand written speech, then there's no doubt."

"Besides, why wait until later? If they can't learn now, we can try later. If they do catch on now, we've not wasted any time."

"I must apologize," said Holmyard. "I lacked imagination. I

should have thought of that step. You know, John, I resented the fact that you had, through pure accident, been chosen to make this first venture among the horowitzes. I thought a trained scientist, preferably myself, should have been the contact man. But I see now that having you out there isn't a mistake. You have what we professionals too often too quickly lose: the enthusiastic imagination of the amateur. Knowing the difficulties or even the improbabilities, we allow ourselves to be too cautious."

"Oh, oh!" said Carmody. "Excuse me, but it looks as if the chief is organizing everybody for some big move. He's running around, gabbling his nonsense syllables like mad and pointing to the north. He's also pointing at the branches of the trees. Oh, I see what he's getting at. Almost all of the fruit is eaten. And he wants us to follow him."

"Which direction?"

"South. Towards you."

"John, there's a nice valley about a thousand miles north of here. We found it during the last expedition and noted it because it's higher, cooler, much better watered. And it not only contains flint but iron ores."

"Yes, but the chief evidently wants us to go in the opposite direction."

There was a pause. Finally, Carmody sighed and said, "I get

the message. You want me to lead them north. Well, you know what that means."

"I'm sorry, John. I know it means conflict. And I can't order you to fight the chief. That is, if it's necessary for you to fight."

"I rather think it will be. Too bad, too; I wouldn't exactly call this Eden, but at least no blood has been shed among these people. And now, because we want to plumb their potentiality, lead them on to higher things . . ."

"You don't have to, John. Nor will I hold it against you if you just tag along and study them wherever they go. After all, we've gotten far more data than I ever dreamed possible. But . . ."

"But if I don't try to take over the reins of leadership, these beings may remain at a low level for a long long time. Besides, we have to determine if they are capable of any technology. So . . . the end justifies the means. Or so say the Jesuits. I am not a Jesuit, but I can justify the premise on which we're basing the logic of this argument."

Carmody did not say another word to Holmyard. He marched up to the big leader, took a stand before him, and, shaking his head fiercely and pointing to the north, he shouted, "Us go this way! No go that way!"

The chief stopped his gabbling and cocked his head to one side and looked at Carmody. His face,

bare of feathers, became red. Carmody could not tell, of course, if it was the red of embarrassment or of rage. So far as he could determine, his position in this society had been a very peculiar one—from the society's viewpoint. It had not taken him long to see that a definite peck-order existed here. The big horowitz could bully anyone he wanted to. The male just below him in this unspoken hierarchy could not—or would not—resist the chief's authority. But he could bully everybody below him. And so forth. All the males, with the exception of one weak character, could push the females around. And the females had their own system, similar to the males, except that it seemed to be more complex. The top female in the peck-order system could lord it over all but one female, and yet this female was subject to the authority of at least half the other females. And there were other cases whose intricacy defied Carmody's powers of analysis.

One thing he had noticed, though, and that was that the young were all treated with kindness and affection. They were, in fact, very much the spoiled brats. Yet, they had their own give-and-take-orders organization.

Carmody had up to this time held no position in the social scale. They seemed to regard him as something apart, a *rara avis*, an unknown quantity. The chief had

made no move to establish Carmody's place here, so the others had not dared to try. And, probably, the chief had not dared because he had been witness to Carmody's killing of the leonoid.

But now the stranger had placed him in such a position that he must fight or else step down. And he must have been the top brass too long to endure that idea. Even if he knew Carmody's destructive potential, he did not intend to submit meekly.

So Carmody guessed from the reddened skin, the swelling chest, the veins standing out on his forehead, the glaring eyes, the snapping beak, the clenched fists, the sudden heavy breathing.

The chief, Whoot, was impressive. He stood a foot and a half taller than the man, his arms were long and muscular, his chest huge, and his beak with its sharp meat-eater's teeth and his three-toed legs with their sharp talons looked as if they could tear the heart out of Carmody.

But the little man knew that the horowitz didn't weigh as much as a man his height, for his bones were the half-hollow bones of a bird. Moreover, though the chief was undoubtedly a capable and vicious fighter, and intelligent, he did not have at his command the sophisticated knowledge of infighting of a dozen worlds. Carmody was as deadly with his hands and feet as any man alive; many

times, he had killed and crippled.

The fight was sharp but short. Carmody used a *mélange* of all his skills and very quickly had the chief reeling, bloody-beaked, and glassy-eyed. He gave the *coup de grace* by chopping with the edge of his palm against the side of the thick neck. He stood over the unconscious body of Whoot, breathing heavily, bleeding from three wounds delivered by the point of the beak and pointed teeth and suffering from a blow of a fist against his ribs.

He waited until the big horowitz had opened his eyes and staggered to his feet. Then, pointing north, he shouted, "Follow me!"

In a short time, they were walking after him as he headed for a grove of trees about two miles away. Whoot walked along in the rear of the group, his head hung low. But after a while he regained some of his spirit. And, when a large male tried to make him carry some of the water gourds, he jumped on the male and knocked him to the ground. That re-established his position in the group. He was below Carmody but still higher than the rest.

Carmody was glad, for the little Tutu was Whoot's child. He had been afraid that his defeat of her father might make her hostile to him. Apparently, the change in authority had made no difference, unless it was that she stayed even more by his side. While they

walked together, Carmody pointed out more animals and plants, naming them. She repeated the words, sound-perfect, after him. By now she had even adopted his style of speaking, his individual rhythm pattern, his manner of saying, "Heh?" when a strong thought seized him, his habit of talking to himself.

And she imitated his laugh. He pointed out a thin, shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round and looking like a live mop.

"That a borogove."

"That a borogove," she repeated.

Suddenly, he laughed, and she laughed, too. But he could not share the source of his mirth with her. How could he explain *Alice in Wonderland* to her? How could he tell her that he had wondered what Lewis Carroll would think if he could see his fictional creation come to life on a strange planet circling around a strange star and centuries after he had died? Or know that his works were still alive and bearing fruit, even if weird fruit? Perhaps, Carroll would approve. For he had been a strange little man—like Carmody, thought Carmody—and he would consider the naming of this bird the apex of congruous incongruity.

He sobered immediately, for a huge animal resembling a green rhinoceros with three knobbed horns trotted thunderingly to-

wards them. Carmody took his pistol out from his bustle, causing Tutu's eyes to widen even more than at the sight of the tricorn. But, after stopping only a few feet from the group and sniffing the wind, the tricorn trotted slowly away. Carmody replaced the pistol, and he called Holmyard.

"You'll have to forget about caching the stuff I ordered in that tree," he said. "I'm leading them on the exodus as of now. I'll build a fire tonight, and you can relocate about five miles behind us. I'm going to try to get them to walk past this grove ahead, go on to another. I plan to lead them on a two mile and a half trek every day. I think that's about as far as I can push them. We should reach the valley of milk and honey you described in nine months. By then, my child," he tapped the egg on his chest, "should be hatched. And my contract with you will be terminated."

He had less trouble than he thought he would. Though the group scattered as soon as they reached the grove, they reassembled at his insistence and left the tempting fresh fruits and the many rodents to be found under the rocks. They did not murmur while he led them another mile to another grove. Here he decided they'd camp for the rest of the day and night.

After dusk fell, and he had supervised Tutu's building of a

fire, he sneaked away into the darkness. Not without some apprehension, for more carnivores prowled under the two small moons than in the light of the sun. Nevertheless, he walked without incident for a mile and there met Doctor Holmyard, waiting in a jeep.

After borrowing a cigarette from Holmyard, he described the events of the day more fully than he had been able to do over the transceiver. Holmyard gently squeezed the egg clinging to Carmody's chest, and he said, "How does it feel not only to give birth to a horowitz, but to give birth to speech among them? To become, in a sense, the father of all the horowitzes?"

"It makes me feel very odd," said Carmody. "And aware of a great burden on me. After all, what I teach these sentients will determine the course of their lives for thousands of years to come. Maybe even further.

"Then again, all my efforts may come to nothing."

"You must be careful. Oh, by the way, here's the stuff you asked for. A holster and belt. And, in a knapsack, ammo, a flashlight, more sugar, salt, paper, pen, a pint of whiskey."

"You don't expect me to give them firewater?" said Carmody.

"No," chuckled Holmyard. "This bottle is your private stock.

I thought you might like a nip now and then. After all, you must need something to buck up your spirits, being without your own kind."

"I've been too busy to be lonely. But nine months is a long time. No, I don't really believe I'll get unbearably lonely. These people are strange. But I'm sure they have spirits kindred to mine, waiting to be developed."

They talked some more, planning their method of study for the year to come. Holmyard said that a man would always be in the ship and in contact with Carmody, if an emergency should come up. But everybody would be busy, for this expedition had many projects in the fire. They would be collecting and dissecting specimens of all sorts, making soil and air and water analyses, geological surveys, digging for fossils, etc. Quite often the ship would take a trip to other regions, even to the other side of this planet. But when that happened, two men and a jeep would be left behind.

"Listen, Doc," said Carmody. "Couldn't you take a trip to this valley and get some flint ore? Then leave it close to us, so my group could find it? I'd like to find out *now* if they're capable of using weapons and tools."

Holmyard nodded and said, "A good idea. Will do. We'll have the flint for you before the week's up."

Holmyard shook Carmody's hand, and the little monk left. He lit his way with the flashlight, for he hoped that, though it might attract some of the big carnivores, it might also make them wary of getting too close.

He had not gone more than a hundred yards when, feeling as if he were being stalked, and also feeling foolish because he was obeying an irrational impulse, he whirled. And his flashlight centered on the small figure of Tutu.

"What you do here?" he said. She approached slowly, as if fearing him, and he rephrased his question. There were so many words that she did not know that he could not, at this point, fully communicate with her.

"Why you here?"

Never before had he used *why*, but he thought that now, under the circumstances, she might understand it.

"Me . . ." she made a motion of following.

"Follow."

"Me follow . . . you. Me no . . . want you hurt. Big meat-eaters in dark. Bite, claw, kill, eat you. You die; me . . . how you say it?"

He saw what she meant, for tears were filling her large brown eyes.

"Cry," he said. "Ah, Tutu, you cry for me?"

He was touched.

"Me cry," she said, her voice

shaking, on the edge of sobs. "Me . . ."

"Feel bad. Feel bad."

"John die after now . . . me want to die. Me . . ."

He realized that she had just coined a term for the future, but he did not try to teach her the use of the future tense. Instead, he held out his arms and embraced her. She put her head against him, the sharp edge of her beak digging into the flesh between his ribs, and she burst into loud weeping.

Stroking the plumage on top of her round head, he said, "No feel bad, Tutu. John love you. You know . . . me love you."

"Love. Love," she said between sobs. "Love, love. Tutu love you!"

Suddenly, she pushed herself away from him, and he released her. She began to wipe the tears from her eyes with her fists and to say, "Me love. But . . . me 'fraid of John."

"'Fraid? Why you 'fraid of John?"

"Me see . . . uh . . . horowitz . . . by you. You look like him, but not look like him. Him . . . how say . . . funny-looking, that right? And him fly like vulture, but no wing . . . on . . . me no able to say on what him fly. Very . . . funny. You talk to him. Me understand some words . . . no some."

Carmody sighed. "All me able to tell you now that him no horowitz. Him man. Man. Him come

from stars." He pointed upwards.

Tutu also looked up, then her gaze returned to him, and she said, "You come from . . . star?"

"Child, you understand that?"

"You no horowitz. You place on beak and feathers. But . . . me understand you no horowitz."

"Me man," he said. "But enough of this, child. Some day . . . after soon . . . me tell you about the stars."

And, despite her continued questioning, he refused to say another word on the subject.

The days and then weeks and then months passed. Steadily, walking about two and a half to three miles a day, progressing from grove to grove, the band followed Carmody northwards. They came across the flint $\ddot{s}$  left by the ship. And Carmody showed them how to fashion spearheads and arrowheads and scrapers and knives. He made bows for them and taught them to shoot. In a short time, every horowitz who had the manual skill was making weapons and tools for himself. Fingers and hands were banged and cut, and one male lost an eye from a flying chip. But the group began to eat better; they shot the cervinoid and equinoid animals and, in fact, anything that wasn't too big and looked as if it might be edible. They cooked the meat, and Carmody showed them how to smoke and dry the meat. They began to

get very bold, and it was this that was the undoing of Whoot.

One day, while with two other males, he shot a leonoid that refused to move away from their approach. The arrow only enraged the beast, and it charged. Whoot stood his ground and sent two more arrows into it, while his companions threw their spears. But the dying animal got hold of Whoot and smashed in his chest.

By the time the two had come for Carmody, and he had run to Whoot, Whoot was dead.

This was the first death among the group since Carmody had joined them. Now he saw that they did not regard death dumbly, as animals did, but as an event that caused outcries of protest. They wailed and wept and beat their chests and cast themselves down on the ground and rolled in the grass. Tutu wept as she stood by the corpse of her father. Carmody went to her and held her while she sobbed her heart out. He waited until their sorrow had spent itself, then he organized a burial party. This was a new thing to them; apparently, they had been in the custom of leaving their dead on the ground. But they understood him, and they dug a shallow hole in the ground with sharp-pointed sticks and piled rocks over the grave.

It was then that Tutu said to him, "Me father. Where him go now?"

Carmody was speechless for several seconds. Without one word from him, Tutu had thought of the possibility of afterlife. Or so he supposed, for it was easy to misinterpret her. She might just be unable to conceive of the discontinuity of the life of one she loved. But, no, she knew death well. She had seen others die before he had joined the group, and she had seen the death and dissolution of many large animals, not to mention the innumerable rodents and insects she had eaten.

"What think the others?" he said, gesturing at the rest of the group.

She looked at them. "Adults no think. Them no talk. Them like the animals."

"Me—a child. Me think. You taught me to think. Me ask you where Whoot go because you understand."

As he had many times since he met her, Carmody sighed. He had a heavy and serious responsibility. He did not want to give her false hopes, yet he did not want to destroy her hopes—if she had any—of living after death. And he just did not know if Whoot had a soul or, if he did, what provision might be made for it. Neither did he know about Tutu. It seemed to him that a being who was sentient, who had self-consciousness, who could use verbal symbolism, must have a soul. Yet, he did not know.

Nor could he try to explain his dilemma to her. Her vocabulary, after only six months of contact with him, could not deal with the concepts of immortality. Neither could his, for even the sophisticated language at his command did not deal with reality but only with abstractions dimly comprehended, with vague hopes only stammered about. One could have faith and could try to translate that faith into effective action. But that was all.

Slowly, he said, "You understand that Whoot's body and the lion's body become earth?"

"Yes."

"And that seeds fall on this earth, and grass and trees grow there and feed from the earth, which Whoot and the lion become?"

Tutu nodded her beaked head. "Yes. And the birds and the jackals will eat the lion. Them will eat Whoot, too, if them able to drag the rocks from him."

"But at least a part of the lion and of Whoot become soil. And the grasses growing from them become partly them. And the grass in turn become eaten by antelopes, and the lion and Whoot not only become grass but beast."

"And if me eat the antelope," interrupted Tutu excitedly, her beak clacking, her brown eyes shining, "then Whoot become part of me. And me of him."

Carmody realized he was tread-



ing on theologically dangerous ground.

"Me no mean that Whoot live in you," he said. "Me mean . . ."

"Why him no live in me? And in the antelopes that eat grass and in the grass? Oh, understand! Because Whoot then become breaked into many pieces! Him live in many different creatures. That what you mean, John?"

She wrinkled her brow. "But how him live if all teared apart? No, him no! Him body go so many places. What me mean, John, where Whoot go?"

She repeated fiercely, "Where *him* go?"

"Him go wherever the Creator send him," replied Carmody, desperately.

"Cre-a-tor?" she echoed, stressing each syllable.

"Yes. Me teachd you the word *creature*, meaning any living being. Well, a creature-must become created. And the Creator create him. Create mean to cause to live. Also mean to bring into becoming what no becomed before."

"Me mother me creator?"

She did not mention her father because she, like the other children and probably the adults, too, did not connect copulation with reproduction. And Carmody had not explained the connection to her because, as yet, she lacked the vocabulary.

Carmody sighed and said, "Worse and worse. No. You moth-

er no you Creator. Her make the egg from her body and the food her eat. But her no create you. In the beginning . . ."

Here he boggled. And he wished that he had become a priest and had a priest's training. Instead, he was only a monk. Not a simple monk, for he had seen too much of the Galaxy and had lived too much. But he was not equipped to deal with this problem. For one thing, he just could not hand out a ready-made theology to her. The theology of this planet was in formation and would not even be born until Tutu and her kind had full speech.

"Me tell you more in the future," he said. "After many suns. For this time, you must become satisfied with the little me able to tell you. And that . . . well, the Creator make this whole world, stars, sky, water, animals, and the horowitzes. He make you mother and her mother and her mother's mother's mother. Many mothers many suns ago, he make . . ."

"*He?* That him name? *He?*"

Carmody realized he had slipped up in using the nominative case, but old habit had been too much for him.

"Yes. You can call him *He*."

"He the Mother of the first mother?" said Tutu. "He the Mother of all creatures' Mothers?"

"Here. Have some sugar. And run along and play. Me tell you more later."

After I have time to think, he said to himself.

He pretended to scratch his head and slid back the activating plate on the transceiver curved over his skull. And he asked the operator on duty to call Holmyard. In a minute, Holmyard's voice said, "What's up, John?"

"Doc, isn't a ship due in a few days to drop down and pick up the records and specimens you've collected so far? Will you have it take a message back to Earth? Notify my superior, the abbot of Fourth of July, Arizona, that I am in deep need of guidance."

And Carmody related his talk with Tutu and the questions that he had to answer in the future.

"I should have told him where I was going before I left," he said. "But I got the impression that he had put me on my own. However, I am now in a predicament which requires that wiser and better trained men help me."

Holmyard chuckled. He said, "I'll send on your message, John. Though I don't think you need any help. You're doing as well as anyone could. Anyone who tries to maintain objectivity, that is. Are you sure that your superiors will be able to do that? Or that it may not take them a hundred years to arrive at a decision? Your request might even cause a council of the Church heads. Or a dozen councils."

Carmody groaned, and then he

said, "I don't know. I think I'll start teaching the kids how to read and write and do arithmetic. There, at least, I'll be navigating in safe waters."

He shut off the transceiver and called Tutu and the other young who seemed capable of literacy.

In the days and nights that followed, the young made exceptional progress, or so it seemed to Carmody. It was as if the young had been fallow, just waiting for the touch of somebody like Carmody. Without too much trouble, they learned the relation between the spoken and the written word. To keep them from being confused, Carmody modified the alphabet as it was used on Earth and made a truly phonetic system so that every phoneme would have a parallel notation. This was something that had been talked about for two hundred years among the English-speakers of Earth but had not, so far, been done. Orthography there, though it had changed, still lagged behind the spoken word and presented the same maddening and confusing picture to the foreigner who wished to learn English.

But reading and writing in short time led to Carmody's being forced to teach another art: drawing. Tutu, without any hint on his part that she should do so, one day began to make a sketch of him. Her efforts were crude, and

he could have straightened her out very quickly. But, aside from later teaching her the principles of perspective, he made no effort to help her. He felt that if she, and the others who also began to draw, were influenced too much by Terrestrial ideas of art, they would not develop a truly Feral art. In this decision he was commended by Holmyard.

"Man has a fundametally primate brain, and so he has worked out a primate's viewpoint through his art. So far, we've had no art produced by—forgive me—bird-brains. I'm with you, John, in allowing them to paint and sculpture in their own peculiar fashion. The world may some day be enriched by avian artistry. Maybe, maybe not."

Carmody was busy from the time he woke, which was dawn, until the time he went to sleep, about three hours after nightfall. He not only had to spend much time in his teaching, but he had to act as arbitrator—or rather dictator—of disputes. The disputes among the adults were much more trying than among the young, for he could communicate effectively with the latter.

The cleavage between the young and the adults was not as strong as he had expected. The adults were intelligent, and, though speechless, could learn to make flint tools and weapons and could shoot arrows and throw

spears. They even learned to ride horses.

Halfway towards their destination, they began to encounter bands of animals that strongly resembled hairless horses. Carmody, as an experiment, caught one and broke it. He made reins from bone and a strong-fibered grass. He had no saddles at first but rode it bareback. Later, after the older children and the adults had caught their own horses and began to ride them, they were taught how to make saddles and reins from the thick skin of the tricorn.

Shortly after, he met his first resistance from the young. They came to a place where a lake was, where trees grew thickly, where a breeze blew most of the time from the nearby hills, and where the game was numerous. Tutu said that she and the others thought it would be a good idea if they built a walled village, such as Carmody had told them they would build when they got to the Valley.

"Many speechless ones live around here," she said. "Us able to take them young and raise them, make them us people. That way, us become stronger. Why travel every day? Us become tired of traveling, become footsore, saddlesore. Us able to make—barns?—for them horses, too. And us able to catch other animals, breed them, have plenty of meat to kill without hunting. Also, us able to plant seeds like you telled us and

grow crops. Here a good place. Just as good as that Valley you speaked of, maybe gooder. Us children talked it over, decided to stay here."

"This a good place," said Carmody. "But not the goodest. Me have knowledge of the Valley, and me have knowledge that there many things this place no have. Such as flint, iron, which much gooder than flint, healthier climate, not so many big beasts that eat meat, gooder soil in which to grow crops, and other things."

"How you have knowledge of this Valley?" said Tutu. "You seed it? You goed there?"

"Me have knowledge of the Valley because someone who there once telled me of it," said Carmody. (And he wished that he had not avoided the use of the verb *know* to avoid confusion with the adjective and adverb *no*. So far he had not introduced any homonyms into the horowitz's vocabulary. But he determined at this moment to make use of *know*. He could, though, partially reinstate the original Old English pronunciation and have them pronounce the *k*. At the first chance, he would do that.)

"Who telled you of the Valley?" said Tutu. "No horowitz doed it, because none haved speech until you teachd them how to talk. Who telled you?"

"The man doed it," replied Carmody. "Him goed there."

"The man who comed from the stars? The man me seed you talking to that night?"

Carmody nodded, and she said, "Him have knowledge of where us go after death?"

He was caught by surprise and could only stare, open-mouthed, at her a few seconds. Holmyard was an agnostic and denied that there was any valid evidence for the immortality of man. Carmody, of course, agreed with him that there was no scientifically provable evidence, no facts. But there were enough indications of the survival of the dead to make any open-minded agnostic wonder about the possibility. And, of course, Carmody believed that every man would live forever because he had faith that man would do so. Moreover, he had a personal experience which had convinced him. (But that's another story.)

"No, the man no have knowledge of where us go after death. But me have knowledge."

"Him a man; you a man," said Tutu. "If you have knowledge, why no him?"

Again, Carmody was speechless. Then he said, "How you have knowledge that me a man?"

Tutu shrugged and said, "At first, you fool us. Later, everybody have knowledge. Easy to see that you put on beak and feathers."

Carmody began to remove the beak, which had chafed and irritated him for many months.

"Why no say so?" he said angrily. "You try to make fool of me?"

Tutu looked hurt. She said, "No. Nobody make fool of you, John. Us love you. Us just thinked you liked to put on beak and feathers. Us no have knowledge of why, but if you like to do so, O.K. with us. Anyway, no try to get off what we talk about. You say you have knowledge of where dead go. Where?"

"Me no supposed to tell you where. No just yet, anyway. Later."

"You no wish to scare us? Maybe that a bad place us no like? That why you no tell us?"

"Later, me tell. It like this, Tutu. When me first comed among you and teached you speech, me no able to teach you all the words. Just them you able to understand. Later, teach you harder words. So it now. You no able to understand even if me tell you. You become older, have knowledge of more words, become smarter. Then me tell. See?"

She nodded and also clicked her beak, an additional sign of agreement.

"Me tell the others," she said. "Many times, while you sleep, we talk about where us go after us die. What use of living only short time if us no keep on living? What good it do? Some say it do no good; us just live and die, and that that. So what? But most of us no able to think that. Become

scared. Besides, no make sense to us. Everything else in this world make sense. Or seem to. But death no make sense. Death that last forever no do, anyway. Maybe us die to make room for others. Because if us no die, if ancestors no die, then soon this world become too crowded, and all starve to death, anyway. You tell us this world no flat but round like a ball and this force—what you call it, gravity?—keep us from falling off. So us see that soon no more room if us no die. But why no go to a place where plenty of room? Stars, maybe? You tell us there plenty of round worlds like this among the stars. Why us not go there?"

"Because them worlds also have plenty of creatures on them," said Carmody.

"Horowitzes?"

"No. Some have mans on them; other have creatures as different from both man and horowitz as me different from you. Or from a horse or a bug."

"Plenty to learn. Me glad me no have to find out all that by myself. Me wait until you tell me everything. But me become excited thinking about it."

Carmody had a council with the older children, and the upshot was that he agreed they should settle down for a short period at this site. He thought that, when they began to chop down trees for a stockade and houses, they would

break and dull their flint axes and in a short time would run out of flint. Not to mention that his descriptions of the Valley would influence the more restless among them to push on.

Meanwhile, the egg on his chest grew larger and heavier, and he found it an increasing burden and irritation.

"I just wasn't cut out to be a mother," he told Holmyard over the transceiver. "I would like to become a Father, yes, in the clerical sense. And that demands certain maternal qualities. But, literally, and physically, I am beginning to be bothered."

"Come on in, and we'll take another sonoscope of the egg," said Holmyard. "It's time that we had another record of the embryo's growth, anyway. And we'll give you a complete physical to make sure that the egg isn't putting too much strain on you."

That night, Carmody met Holmyard, and they flew back in the jeep to the ship. This was now stationed about twenty miles from Carmody, because of the far-ranging of the horowitzes on their horses. In the ship's laboratory, the little monk was put through a series of tests. Holmyard said, "You've lost much weight, John. You're no longer fat. Do you eat well?"

"More than I ever did. I'm eating for two now, you know."

"Well, we've found nothing alarming or even mildly disturbing. You're healthier than you ever were, mainly because you've gotten rid of that flab. And the little devil you're carrying around is growing apace. From the studies we've made on horowitzes we've caught, the egg grows until it reaches a diameter of three inches and a weight of four pounds.

"This biological mechanism of attaching eggs to the bloodstream of hosts of another species is amazing enough. But what biological mechanism enables the foetus to do this? What keeps it from forming antibodies and killing itself? How can it accept the bloodstream of another totally different species? Of course, one thing that helps is that the blood cells are the same shape as a man's; no difference can be detected with microscopic examination. And the chemical composition is approximately the same. But even so . . . yes, we may be able to get another grant just to study this mechanism. If we could discover it, the benefit to mankind might be invaluable."

"I hope you do get another grant," said Carmody. "Unfortunately, I won't be able to help you. I must report to the abbot of the monastery of Wildenwooly."

"I didn't tell you when you came in," said Holmyard. "because I didn't want to upset you and thus bollix up your physical. But

the supply ship landed yesterday. And we got a message for you."

He handed Carmody a long envelope covered with several official-looking seals. Carmody tore it open and read it. Then he looked up at Holmyard.

"Must be bad news, judging from your expression," said Holmyard.

"In one way, no. They inform me that I must live up to my contract and cannot leave here until the egg is hatched. But the day my contract expires, I must leave. And, furthermore, I am not to give the horowitzes any religious instruction at all. They must find out for themselves. Or rather, they must have their peculiar revelation—if any. At least, until a council of the Church has convened and a decision arrived at. By then, of course, I'll be gone."

"And I'll see to it that your successor has no religious affiliations," said Holmyard. "Forgive me, John, if I seem anticlerical to you. But I do believe that the horowitzes, if they develop a religion, should do it on their own."

"Then why not their speech and technology?"

"Because those are tools with which they may deal with their environment. They are things which, in time, they would have developed on lines similar to those of Earth."

"Do they not need a religion to ensure that they do not misuse

this speech and technology? Do they not need a code of ethics?"

Holmyard smiled and gave him a straight and long look. Carmody blushed and fidgeted.

"All right," said Carmody, finally. "I opened my big mouth and put both my feet in it. You don't need to recite the history of the various religions on Earth. And I know that a society may have a strong and workable code of ethics with no concept of a divinity who will punish transgressors temporally or eternally.

"But the point is, religions may change and evolve. The Christianity of the twelfth century is not exactly like that of the twentieth century, and the spirit of the religion of our time differs in more than one aspect from that of the twentieth. Besides, I wasn't intending to convert the horowitzes. My own Church wouldn't permit me to do so. All I have done so far is tell them that there is a Creator."

"And even that they misunderstood," said Holmyard, laughing. "They refer to God as He but classify Him as a female."

"The gender doesn't matter. What does is that I am in no position to reassure them of immortality."

Holmyard shrugged to indicate he couldn't see what difference it made. But he said, "I sympathize with your distress because it is causing you pain and anxiety.

However, there is nothing I can do to help. And, apparently, your Church is not going to, either."

"I made a promise to Tutu," Carmody said, "and I don't want to break that. Then she would lose faith."

"Do you think they regard you as God?"

"Heaven forbid! But I must admit that I have worried about that happening. So far, there has been no indication on their part that they do so regard me."

"But what about after you leave them?" said Holmyard.

Carmody could not forget the zoologist's parting reply. He had no difficulty getting to sleep that night. For the first time since he had joined the group, he was allowed to sleep late. The sun had climbed halfway towards its zenith before he woke. And he found the partially constructed village in an uproar.

Not that of chaos but of purposeful action. The adults were standing around looking bewildered, but the young were very busy. Mounted on their horses, they were herding ahead of them, at the point of their spears, a group of strange horowitzes. There were some adults among these, but most were youngsters between the ages of seven and twelve.

"What mean what you do?" said Carmody indignantly to Tutu.

The smile-muscles around her

beak wrinkled, and she laughed.

"You no here last night, so us no able to tell you what us planned to do. Anyway, nice surprise, heh? Us decide to raid them wild horowitzes that live near here. Us catch them sleeping; drive away adults, forced to kill some, too bad."

"And why you do this?" said Carmody, aware that he was about to lose his temper.

"You no understand? Me thinked you understand everything."

"Me no God," said Carmody. "Me telled you that often enough."

"Me forget sometimes," said Tutu, who had lost her smile. "You angry?"

"Me no angry until you tell me why you did this."

"Why? So us able to make us tribe bigger. Us teach the little ones how to talk. If them no learn, them grow up to become adults. And adults no learn how to talk. So them become like the beasts. You no want that, surely?"

"No. But you killed!"

Tutu shrugged. "What else to do? Them adults tried to kill us; us killed them, instead. Not many. Most runned off. Besides, you say O.K. to kill animals. And adults same as animals because them no able to talk. Us no kill child's because them able to learn to talk. Us—what you say? adopt—yes, us adopt them. Them become us brothers and sisters. You



telled me that every horowitz me brother and sister, even if me never see them."

She regained her smile and, bending eagerly towards him, she said, "Me haved a good thought while on raid. Instead of eating eggs that mothers hatch when no enough adults to attach eggs to, why not attach eggs to childs and to horses, and other animals, too? That way, us increase us tribe much faster. Becomé big fastly."

And so it was. Within a month's time, every horowitz large enough to carry the weight, and every horse, bore an egg on his/her chest.

Carmody reported this to Holmyard. "I see now the advantage of extra-uterine development of the embryo. If the unborn aren't as well protected from injury, it does furnish a means for a larger number to be born."

"And who's going to take care of all these young?" said Holmyard. "After all, the horowitz chick is as helpless as and requires as much care as the human infant."

"They're not going hog-wild. The number to be produced is strictly regulated. Tutu has it figured out how many chicks each mother can adequately care for. If the mothers can't furnish enough regurgitated food, they will prepare a paste of fruit and meat for the chicks. The mothers no longer have to spend a good

part of their time hunting for food; the males are doing that now."

"This society of yours is not developing quite along the lines of those of Paleolithic Earth," said Holmyard. "I see an increase towards a communistic trend in the future. The children will be produced *en masse*, and their raising and education will have to be done collectively. However, at this stage, in order to gain a large enough population to be stable, it may be well for them to organize on an assembly-line basis.

"But there's one thing you've either not noticed or have purposely neglected to mention. You said the attaching of the eggs will be strictly regulated. Does that mean that any eggs for which there is no provision will be eaten? Isn't that a method of birth control?"

Carmody was silent for a moment, then he said, "Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, what? I'll admit I don't like the idea. But I don't have any justification for objecting to the horowitzes. These people don't have any Scriptural injunctions, you know. Not yet, anyway. Furthermore, under this system, many more will be given a chance for life."

"Cannibalism and birth control," said Holmyard. "I'd think you'd be glad to get out of this, John."

"Who's talking about the anthropocentric attitude now?" Carmody retorted.

Nevertheless, Carmody was troubled. He couldn't tell the horowitzes not to eat the surplus eggs, for they just would not have understood. Food wasn't so easy to get that they could pass up this source of supply. And he couldn't tell them that they were committing murder. Murder was the illegal slaying of a being with a soul. Did the horowitzes have souls? He didn't know. Terrestrial law maintained that the illegal killing of any member of a species capable of verbal symbolism was murder. But the Church, though it enjoined its members to obey that law or be punished by the secular government, had not admitted that that definition had a valid theological basis. The Church was still striving to formulate a rule which could be applied towards recognition of a soul in extra-terrestrial beings. At the same time, they admitted the possibility that sapients of other planets might not have souls, might not need them. Perhaps the Creator had made other provisions for assuring their immortality—if any.

"It's all right for *them* to sit around a table and discuss their theories," said Carmody to himself. "But I am in the field of action; I must work by rule of thumb. And God help me if my thumb slips!"

During the next month he did many things in the practical area. He arranged with Holmyard to send the ship to the Valley and there dig up and transport to the outskirts of the village several tons of iron ore. The following morning he took the children to the place where the ore lay. They gave cries of astonishment, cries which increased as he told them what they were to do with it.

"And where this iron ore come from?" asked Tutu.

"Mans bringed it from the Valley."

"On horses?"

"No. Them bringed it in a ship which comed from the stars. The same ship that carried me from the stars."

"Me able to see it some day?"

"No. You forbidden. No good for you to see it."

Tutu wrinkled her brow with disappointment and clacked her beak. But she made no further reference to it at that time. Instead, she and the others, with Carmody's help and some of the more cooperative adults, built furnaces to smelt the ore. Afterwards, they built a furnace to add carbon from charcoal to the iron, and they made steel weapons, bridle braces and bits, and tools. Then they began to construct steel parts for wagons. Carmody had decided that it was time now to teach them to construct wagons.

"This fine," said Tutu, "But

what us do when all the iron ore gone, and the steel us make rust and wear out?"

"There more in the Valley," said Carmody. "But us must go there. The starship bring no more."

Tutu cocked her head and laughed. "You shrewd man, John. You know how to get us to go to Valley."

"If us to go, us must get a move on soon," said Carmody. "Us must arrive before winter come and snow fall."

"Hard for any of us to imagine winter," she said. "This cold you talk about something us no able to understand."

Tutu knew what she was talking about. When Carmody called another council and exhorted them to leave at once for the Valley, he met resistance. The majority did not want to go; they liked it too well where they were. And Carmody could see that, even among the horowitzes, and as young as they were, the conservative personality was the most numerous. Only Tutu and a few others backed Carmody; they were the radicals, the pioneers, pushers-ahead.

Carmody did not try to dictate to them. He knew he was held in high regard, was, in fact, looked upon almost as a god. But even gods may be resisted when they threaten creature comforts, and he did not want to test his author-

ity. If he lost, all was lost. Moreover, he knew that if he became a dictator, these people would not learn the basics of democracy. And it seemed to him that democracy, despite its faults and vices, was the best form of secular government. Gentle coercion was to be the strongest weapon he would use.

Or so he thought. After another month of vainly trying to get them to make the exodus, he became desperate. By now the stick-in-the-muds had another argument. Under Carmody's tutelage, they had planted vegetable gardens and corn, the seeds of which came from seed brought by the supply ship on Carmody's request. If they moved now, they would not be able to profit by their hard work. All would go to waste. Why did Carmody have them break their backs digging and plowing and planting and watering and chasing off the wild life, if he intended them to move on?

"Because me wanted to show you *how* to grow things in the soil," he said. "Me no intend to remain with you forever. When us get to the Valley, me leave."

"No leave us, beloved John!" they cried. "Us need you. Besides, now us have another reason for no go to the Valley. If us no go, then you no leave us."

John had to smile at this child-like reasoning, but he became stern immediately thereafter. "Whether

you go or no go, when this egg hatch, me go. In fact, me go now, anyway. You no go, me leave you behind. Me call on all of you who want to go with me to follow me."

And he gathered Tutu and eleven other adolescents, plus their horses, wagons, weapons, food, and twenty chicks and five adult females. He hoped that the sight of his leaving would cause the others to change their minds. But, though they wept and begged him to stay, they would not go with him.

It was then that he lost his temper and cried, "Very well! If you no do what me know the goodest for you to do, then me destroy you village! And you must come with me because you no have any place else to go!"

"What you mean?" they shouted.

"Me mean that tonight a monster from the stars come and burn up the village. You see!"

Immediately afterwards, he spoke to Holmyard. "You heard me, Doc! I suddenly realized I had to put pressure on them! It's the only way to get them off their fannies!"

"You should have done it long ago," replied Holmyard. "Even if all of you travel fast now, you'll be lucky to get to the Valley before winter."

That night, while Carmody and his followers stood on top of a high hill outside the village,

they watched the spaceship suddenly appear in the dim light cast by the two small moons. The inhabitants of the village must all have been looking up for the promised destroyer, for a shriek from a hundred throats arose. Immediately, there was a mad rush through the narrow gates, and many were trampled. Before all the children, chicks, and adults could get out, the monster loosed a tongue of flame against the log-walls surrounding the village. The walls on the southern side burst into flame, and the fire spread quickly. Carmody had to run down the hill and reorganize the demoralized horowitzes. Only because he threatened them with death if they didn't obey him, would they go back into the enclosure and bring out the horses, wagons, food, and weapons. They then cast themselves at Carmody's feet and begged forgiveness, saying they would never again go against his wishes.

And Carmody, though he felt ashamed because he had scared them so, and also distressed because of the deaths caused by the panic, nevertheless was stern. He forgave them but told them that he was wiser than they, and he knew what was good for them.

From then on, he got very good behavior and obedience from the adolescents. But he had also lost his intimacy with them, even with Tutu. They were all respectful,

but they found it difficult to relax around him. Gone were the jokes and the smiles they had formerly traded.

"You have thrown the fear of God into them," said Holmyard.

"Now, Doc," said Carmody. "You're not suggesting that they think I am God. If I really believed that, I'd disabuse them."

"No, but they believe you're His representative. And maybe a demi-god. Unless you explain the whole affair from beginning to end, they'll continue to think so. And I don't think the explanation will help much. You'd have to outline our society in all its ramifications, and you've neither the time nor ability to do that. No matter what you said, they'd misunderstand you."

Carmody attempted to regain his former cordial relations with them, but he found it impossible. So he devoted himself to teaching them all he could. He either wrote or else dictated to Tutu and other scribes as much science as he had time for. Though the country they had crossed so far was lacking in any sulfur or saltpeter deposits, Carmody knew that the Valley contained them. He wrote down rules for recognizing, mining, and purifying the two chemicals and also the recipe for making gunpowder from them. In addition, he described in great detail how to make rifles and pistols and mer-

cury fulminate, how to find and mine and process lead.

These were only a few of the many technological crafts he recorded. In addition, he wrote down the principles of chemistry, physics, biology, and electricity. Furthermore, he drew diagrams of an automobile which was to be driven by electric motors and powered by hydrogen-air fuel cells. This necessitated a detailed procedure for making hydrogen by the reaction of heated steam with zinc or iron as a catalyst. This, in turn, demanded that he tell them how to identify copper ore and the processes for refining it and making it into wire, how to make magnets, and the mathematical formulae for winding motors.

To do this, he had to call frequently on Holmyard for help. One day, Holmyard said, "This has gone far enough, John. You're working yourself to a shadow, killing yourself. And you're attempting to do the impossible, to compress one hundred thousand years of scientific progress into one. What it took humanity a hundred millenia to develop, you're handing to the horowitzes on a silver platter. Stop it! You've done enough for them by giving them a speech and techniques in working flint and agriculture. Let them do it on their own from now on. Besides, later expeditions will probably get into contact with them and give them all the infor-

mation you're trying to forcefeed them."

"You are probably right," groaned Carmody. "But what bothers me most of all is that, though I've done my best to give them all I can to enable them to deal with the material universe, I've done scarcely anything to give them an ethics. And that is what I should be most concerned with."

"Let them work out their own."

"I don't want to do that. Look at the many wrong, yes, evil, avenues they could take."

"They will take the wrong ones, anyway."

"Yes, but they will have a right one which they can take if they wish."

"Then, for Christ's sake, give it to them!" cried Holmyard. "Quit belly-aching! Do something, or shut up about it!"

"I suppose you're right," said Carmody humbly. "At any rate, I don't have much time left. In a month, I have to go to Wildenwooly. And this problem will be out of my hands."

During the next month, the party left the hot plains and began to travel over high hills and through passes between mountains. The air became cooler, the vegetation changed to that which superficially resembled the vegetation of the uplands of Earth. The nights were cool, and the horowitzes had to huddle around

roaring fires. Carmody instructed them how to tan skins with which to clothe themselves, but he did not allow them to take time out to hunt and skin the animals and make furs from them. "You able to do that when you reach the Valley," he said.

And, two weeks before they were to reach the pass that would lead them to the Valley, Carmody was awakened one night. He felt a tap-tapping in the egg on his chest and knew that the sharp beak of the chick was tearing away at the double-walled leathery covering. By morning a hole appeared in the skin of the egg. Carmody did what he had observed the mothers do. He grabbed hold of the edges of the tear and ripped the skin apart. It felt as if he were ripping his own skin, so long had the egg been a part of him.

The chick was a fine healthy specimen, male, covered with a golden down. It looked at the world with large blue eyes which, as yet, were uncoordinated.

Tutu was delighted. "All of us have brown eyes! Him the first horowitz me ever see with blue eyes! Though me hear that the wild horowitzes in this area have blue eyes. But him have eyes just like you eyes. You make him eyes blue so us know him you son?"

"Me have nothing to do with it," said Carmody. He did not say that the chick was a mutation, or else had carried recessive genes

from mating by ancestors with a member of the blue-eyed race. That would have required too lengthly an explanation. But he did feel uncomfortable. Why had this happened to the chick that *he* was carrying?

By noon the tendrils holding the egg to his flesh had dried up and the empty skin fell to the ground. Within two days, the many little holes in his chest had closed; his skin was smooth.

He was cutting his ties to this world. That afternoon, Holmyard called him and said that his request for an extension of his stay on Feral had been denied. The day his contract ended, he was to leave.

"According to our contract, we have to furnish a ship to transport you to Wildenwooly," said Holmyard. "So, we're using our own. It'll only take a few hours to get you to your destination."

During the next two weeks, Carmody pushed the caravan, giving it only four hours sleep at night and stopping only when the horses had to have rest. Fortunately, the equine of Feral had more endurance, if less speed, than his counterpart on Earth. The evening of the day before he had to leave, they reached the mountain pass which would lead them to the promised Valley. They built fires and bedded down around the warmth. A chilly wind blew from the pass, and Carmody had trou-

ble getting to sleep. It was not so much the cold air as it was his thoughts. They kept going around and around, like Indians circling a wagon train and shooting sharp arrows. He could not keep from worrying about what would happen to his charges after he left them. And he could not quit regretting that he had not given them any spiritual guidance. Tomorrow morning, he thought, tomorrow morning is my last chance. But my brain is numb, numb. If it were left up to me, if my superiors had not ordered me to be silent . . . but then they know best. I would probably do the wrong thing. Perhaps it is best to leave it up to divine revelation. Still, God works through man, and I am a man. . . .

He must have dozed away, for he suddenly awakened as he felt a small body snuggling next to his. It was his favorite, Tutu.

"Me cold," she said. "Also, many times, before the village burn, me sleep in your arms. Why you no ask me to do so tonight? You last night!" she said with a quavering voice, and she was crying. Her shoulders shook, and her beak racked across his chest as she pressed the side of her face against him. And, not for the first time, Carmody regretted that these creatures had hard beaks. They would never know the pleasure of soft lips meeting in a kiss.

"Me love you, John," she said.

"But ever since the monster from the stars destroyed us village, me scared of you, too. But tonight, me forget me scared, and me must sleep in you arms once more. So me able to remember this last night the rest of me life."

Carmody felt tears welling in his own eyes, but he kept his voice firm. "Them who serve the Creator say me have work to do elsewhere. Among the stars. Me must go, even if no wish to. Me sad, like you. But maybe someday me return. No able to promise. But always hope."

"You no should leave. Us still child, and us have adults' work ahead of us. The adults like child, and us like adults. Us need you."

"Me know that true," he said. "But me pray to He that He watch over and protect you."

"Me hope He have more brains than me mother. Me hope He smart as you."

Carmody laughed and said, "He is infinitely smarter than me. No worry. What come, come."

He talked some more to her, mainly advice on what to do during the coming winter and reassurances that he might possibly return. Or, if he did not, that other men would. Eventually, he drifted into sleep.

But he was awakened by her terrified voice, crying in his ear.

He sat up and said, "Why you cry, child?"

She clung to him, her eyes big

in the reflected light of the dying fire. "Me father come to me, and him wake me up! Him say, 'Tutu, you wonder where us horowitzes go after death! Me know, because me go to the land of beyond death. It a beautiful land; you no cry because John must leave. Some day, you see him here. Me allowed to come see you and tell you. And you must tell John that us horowitzes like mans. Us have souls, us no just die and become dirt and never see each other again.'

"Me father telled me that. And him reached out him hand to touch me. And me become scared, and me waked up crying!"

"There, there," said Carmody, hugging her. "You just dream. You know you father no able to talk when him alive. So how him able to talk now? You dreaming."

"No dream, no dream! Him not in me head like a dream! Him standing outside me head, between me and fire! Him throw a shadow! Dreams no have shadows! And why him no able to talk? If him can live after death, why him no talk, too? What you say, 'Why strain at a bug and swallow a horse?'"

"Out of the mouths of babes," muttered Carmody, and he spent the time until dawn talking to Tutu.

At noon of that same day, the horowitzes stood upon the rim of the pass. Below them lay the Valley, flashing with the greens, golds,



yellows, and reds of the autumnal vegetation. In a few more days the bright colors would turn brown, but today the Valley glittered with beauty and promise.

"In a few minutes," said Carmody, "the mans from the skies come in the starwagon. No become frightened; it will not harm you. Me have a few words to say, words which me hope you and you descendants never forget.

"Last night, Tutu seed her father, who had died. Him telled her that all horowitzes have souls and go to another place after them die. The Creator have maked a place for you—so say Whoot—because you He's child. He never forget you. And so you must become good child to He, for He . . ."

Here he hesitated, for he had almost said Father. But, knowing that they had fixed in their minds the maternal image, he continued . . . "for He you Mother.

"Me have telled you the story of how the Creator maked the world from nothing. First, space. Then, atoms created in space. Atoms joined to become formless matter. Formless matter becomed suns, big suns with little suns circling around them. The little suns cooled and becomed planets, like the one you now live on. Seas and land formed.

"And He created life in the seas, life too small to see with the naked eye. But He see. And some day you, too, see. And out of the

little creatures comed big creatures. Fish comed into being. And some fish crawled onto the land and becomed airbreathers with legs.

"And some animals climbed trees and lived there, and their forelimbs becomed wings, and they becomed birds and flyed.

"But one kind of tree-creature climbed down out of the trees before it becomed a bird. And it walked on two legs and what might have becomed wings becomed arms and hands.

"And this creature becomed you ancestor.

"You know this, for me have telled you many times. You know you past. Now, me tell you what you must do in the future, if you wish to become a good child of He. Me give you the law of the horowitz.

"This what He wish you to do every day of you lives.

"Love you Creator even gooder than you own parents.

"Love each other, even the one who hate you.

"Love the animals, too. You able to kill animals for food. But no cause them pain. Work the animals, but feed them and rest them well. Treat the animals as child.

"Tell the truth. Also, seek hard for the truth.

"Do what society say you must do. Unless society say what He no wish you to do. Then, you may defy society.

"Kill only to keep from becoming killed. The Creator no love a murderer or a people who make war without good cause.

"No use evil means to reach a good goal.

"Remember that you horowitzes are not alone in this universe. The universe filled with the child of He. Them no horowitzes, but you must love them, too.

"No fear death, for you live again."

John Carmody looked at them for a moment, wondering upon what paths of good and of evil this speech would set them. Then he walked to a large flat-topped rock on which sat a bowl of water and a loaf of bread made from baked acorn flour.

"Each day at noon, when the sun highest, a male or female choosed by you must do this before you and for you."

He took a piece of bread and dipped it in the water and ate the piece, and then he said, "And the Chooses One must say so all able to hear,

"With this water, from which life first came, me thank me Creator for life. And with this bread, me thank me Creator for the blessings of this world and give me self strength against the evils of life. Thanks to He."

He paused. Tutu was the only one not looking at him, for she was busily writing down his words. Then, she looked up at him as if

wondering if he meant to continue. And she gave a cry and dropped her pencil and tablet and ran to him and put her arms around him.

"Starship come!" she cried. "You no go!"

There was a moan of fear and astonishment from the beaks of the crowd as they saw the shining monster hurtle over the mountain towards them.

Gently, Carmody loosed her embrace and stepped away from her.

"Come a time when the parent must go, and the child must become adult. That time now. Me must go because me wanted elsewhere.

"Just remember, me love you, Tutu. Me love all of you, too. But me no able to stay here. However, He always with you. Me leave you in the care of He."

Carmody stood within the pilothouse and looked at the image of Feral on the screen. It was now no larger to him than a basketball. He spoke to Holmyard.

"I will probably have to explain that final scene to my superiors. I may even be severely rebuked and punished. I do not know. But I am convinced at this moment that I did rightly."

"You were not to tell them they had a soul," said Holmyard. "Not that I myself care one way or another. I think the idea of a soul is ridiculous."

"But you can think of the idea," said Carmody. "And so can the horowitzes. Can a creature capable of conceiving a soul be without one?"

"Interesting question. And unanswerable. Tell me, do you really believe that that little ceremony you instituted will keep them on the straight and narrow?"

"I'm not all fool," said Carmody. "Of course not. But they do have correct basic instruction. If they pervert it, then I am not to blame. I have done my best." "Have you?" said Holmyard.

"You have laid the foundations for a mythology in which you may become the god, or the son of the god. Don't you think that, as time blurs the memory of these events you initiated, and generations pass, that myth after myth and distortion after distortion will completely alter the truth?"

Carmody stared at the dwindling globe. "I do not know. But I have given them something to raise them from beasts to men."

"Ah, Prometheus!" breathed Holmyard. And they were silent for a long time.

### ***Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: XXXVII***

IN 1927, FERDINAND FEGHOOT RESCUED Vaila, a minor planet in the Hebridean System, from a plague of rats who had left a doomed Cassiopeian freighter. On Vaila, no cat could live, so nothing threatened them. "What can we do, sir?" asked the Laird.

"You can make robot cats," Feghoot answered. He designed them, and the natives began turning them out. They killed rat after rat; and the sight of them, in their plastic, striped-tabby skins, cheered everyone up. Success was in sight, and a great celebration was being prepared, when word came of a frightening mutation—a pair of huge rats who were devouring the cats.

"They will reproduce!" moaned the Laird. "We are lost!"

"Not at all," Feghoot said; and he built one last cat. It had no sleek plastic coat. Instead, it was covered with a poor grade of enamel, like an old chamber-pot. Almost at once, a mutant rat saw it and caught it. It was tough, but the rat chewed and chewed. Finally it swallowed—and huge, jagged fragments of the shoddy enamel came loose in its stomach. Soon it died in great agony.

"Wonderful!" cried the overjoyed Laird. "But what happened?"

"He strained at a cat, and swallowed enamel," said Ferdinand Feghoot.

—GRENDAL BRIARTON

*(with thanks to Edward Truscoe)*

*By the author of the prize-winning KRISHNA FLUTING . . . a tale of the Himalayas, of "the terrifying being who lives in the snows," of a priest who disappeared, and of an abbot prepared to go to extremes in defense of his own "truths."*

# THE ONE WHO RETURNS

by John Berry

FATHER RYAN HAD DISAPPEARED completely and mysteriously about two months before my arrival at the hill station of Rampoché on April 25, 1952. He had left the monastery in company with four other European priests and was hiking in the Himalayas somewhere near the Nepal frontier. A botanist of sorts, he had strayed a few steps away from his party, with the intention of identifying a certain tree. His companions never saw him again, although they searched for him all the rest of that day. Sherpas, Lepchas, Tibetans, Nepalese, and several companies of Indian soldiers combed the whole area for a week, in vain.

It surprised me, rather, that a mysterious disappearance should make much of an impression on Rampoché. The town was surrounded by deep gorges and forests where I once saw a python lower ten feet of itself out of a tree to

pull up a yelling thing that looked like a large sloth.

And there were the Yetis, the half-legendary, hairy, man-like creatures who, I am now convinced, do really inhabit the upper slopes of the Himalayas. So far as I can recall, there is nothing funny about the Yeti except the English translation of the Tibetan word—which, if the truth be told, is not even Yeti—made by a charming man whose native tongue is not English. "The terrifying being who lives in the snows" thus becomes "the Abominable Snow Man"—a name that was quickly seized upon, not by true skeptics but by those who were determined not to believe; however, these were mere outsiders.

The people of the mountains know better. They evince a polite curiosity at the many photographs which have now been amassed, showing the huge footprints of the Yetis in the snow. These are com-

mon Yetis, though it is doubtful that the outsider will ever lay eyes on them, for they are masters of privacy. There are other Yetis who are far advanced in the ways of yoga.

And there is the Great Yeti, who is Illumined. His name must not be mentioned.

The story was told to me gradually, over a period of time, in several languages of men and of events; often imperceptibly: a word here or there, perhaps unnoticed at the time, dropped casually by some villager, shopkeeper, porter, or passing lama. For it was only the outsider, like myself, who did not already know the truth.

One morning, not very early, but before the sun had hurdled the Himalayas, I was out splitting wood beside my cabin on the mountainside above Rampoche. A Tibetan lama in purple rags and a tall, peaked cap came down the path. Standing before me and smiling, he began to jingle a little bell with one hand. With the other, he twirled a small drum on a handle, so that it was beaten by two dangling weights, one on each side. Then he sang. I remember the song perfectly, from that one hearing, but having tried once to sing it, I know that the song is his alone—perhaps because he possesses nothing in this world.

When he had sung, he blessed me until I felt blessed.

We squatted on the ground, not quite looking at each other, not quite not looking at each other, not able to concentrate on nor to ignore the perpetual snows of Kinchinjunga, now suddenly kindled into flaming colors by the rising sun. My smile and his smile were the same. They did not belong to either of us. I experienced freedom and contentment, the invisible commodities of this wandering mendicant.

During a fit of madness brought on by dysentery, sentimentality and the study of Sanskrit grammar, I had once insulted a Tibetan lama who came to me begging a bit too boisterously. I pushed him, I shouted curses at him, I threatened and nearly struck him with my brass opium pipe. And he laughed! Backing away in mock terror, the gigantic simpleton—the fool of God—thanked me for the experience. He walked away chortling, happier, if possible, than when he had first come.

Feelings of guilt now made me gauge my present lama's happiness by that of the former one. They seemed about the same, although I had given insults to the other one, and this Lama-ji was sharing my breakfast. Evidently I could have no effect upon either.

Lama-ji stirred butter into his tea and drank it with respect, crinkling his eyes at me.

"The Flat Land must be a very interesting place," he ventured.

I mentioned oceans, deserts and peoples, and improvements in methods of transportation, communication and government. However, he came to the point:

"Your Grand Lama is called a 'Pope,' is he not? Doubtless he is of a very high spiritual attainment?"

I told him that that was certainly the case, but that he had many troubles on account of the sin that is prevalent in the Flat Land.

Lama-ji murmured sympathetically.

"It is true," he said. "Father Ryan showed me a picture of the Pope Lama, and also one of the Illumined Jesus as a young man."

We changed the subject several times and then were silent. In this silence, all at once, I remembered that Father Ryan was the priest who had disappeared.

"Father Ryan," I said.

"We met on a hill before dawn," Lama-ji said, and I felt, looking at him, that he might be speaking metaphorically.

I continued to look at him.

"It was seven days before he was taken," he added.

I said: "I am ignorant. Please tell me what happened to him."

Lama-ji looked at me with surprise, then he said softly:

"The Great Yeti took him—Yeti Guru."

I presumed that the Yeti had eaten Father Ryan.

Lama-ji laughed merrily.

"You are thinking of the big footprints in the snow," he said. "They are different. No, the Great Yeti is a spirit."

"Incarnated?"

"Yes, but he has no need to eat. Father Ryan is still alive."

"What is the Yeti like?"

"He is like a good and great yogi, but he is a Boddhisattva, much bigger than men. He lives in a cave, high, very high up in the snows."

"Why has he taken Father Ryan?"

Lama-ji became very serious. With an awed expression he said:

"Sometimes the Great Yeti comes down from the snows to look at people. Usually he returns alone. But if he finds a human with a pure soul, he will take that person with him. There in the cave Yeti Guru teaches the man and the man receives Illumination."

"But the man does not return to the world?"

"At the end of six months he appears again among human beings in order to teach them. He has one month to do this, and at the end of that time—if he lives that long—he dies quickly and turns to dust. In that month he must stay in dark places, for he casts no shadow, and human beings are afraid at the approach of the Illumined One—and indeed he does make a great deal of trouble for them."

"What kind of trouble?" I asked.

"Ah," said Lama-ji sadly. "Men are provoked by the truth—as in your country they were provoked by the Illumined Jesus before he became a Boddhisattva. Did they not burn him to ashes?"

"No," I said. "They crucified him."

"That is not fatal to One Who Returns," Lama-ji said. "Everyone knows that he must be burned to ashes, like a scroll. Otherwise he goes on teaching and disturbing people. You will see what happens when Father Ryan-Boddhisattva comes down from the snows."

Lama-ji's face was now serene, but with a suggestion of inward irony, a baffling combination of naiveté and sophistication.

"And whose side are you on?" I asked with some asperity.

Lama-ji quaked with suppressed laughter.

"My son," he said, "there are no sides. All is ritual."

At the end of June, I went down to the Gangetic Plains. It was not until the following April that I returned to Rampoché to escape the heat. This time I made the acquaintance of Joan Venkataraman, a handsome, learned and courageous Englishwoman who had married an Indian. Daily she assaulted the Everest of her existence, and neither she nor it could ever admit defeat.

She and I and her two children were hiking along a mountain trail late one afternoon, when we stopped to sit on some boulders, to catch our breath. Joan was not a compulsive talker, but she talked steadily to me on that day, for the simple reason that she had stored up so much that had to be told and could not be told—except to another inward sort of outsider. We sat there gazing out across immense depths and heights and distances of an indescribable grandeur. A black spot at the base of a mountain to our left loomed up curiously. I seemed to recall a white building—

The children—a boy of seven and a girl of about ten—were scampering up the mountainside in back of us. Joan was talking about Freedom. It might be a good thing, she said, to be a nun for the sake of the *esprit de corps*—only she was afraid of finding herself stuck without much *esprit* and no *corps* at all.

"I once knew an Irish priest who was a free spirit," Joan said. "He lived in a monastery that used to be down there, where you see that black spot—it burned down last October, with the Abbot inside, and possibly someone else. The others were Belgians and a couple of Poles. Father Ryan—"

I suppose I looked intense, for Joan at once concentrated on this subject in order to remove any pretext I might have for interfering

with her oblique confession. And indeed I did not wish to intrude. She was creating a world out of words. It was like the falling of snow.

Under it lay Everest.

"The Abbot," Joan was saying, "was a formidable man. I went to see him about the children's education and we had a bit of a row. He was one of those granite-faced Walloons—a convert himself, I suspect. They always go to extremes to make up for their heretical past, you know."

Father Ryan, on the other hand, seemed to have been a good-hearted sort of fellow. He had given the children lessons in natural science until his superior, who may have feared Joan's possible influence on the teacher, forbade him to continue his friendship with them.

Then Father Ryan had disappeared on that hiking expedition.

. . .

And the monastery?

"Last October," Joan said, "the Abbot did a terrible and heroic thing—I've been ashamed of myself ever since for having quarreled with him. Just after nightfall a fire broke out in the monastery. It must have been in the Abbot's cell, because he was the only one who was aware of it.

"He rang the big bell—we heard it for miles around, wild and defiant—and he ordered everyone out of the monastery. Then he locked

the gates to keep anyone from coming back in. He stayed in there alone to fight the fire, and he died in there. It was foolish of him—with help he might have put out the fire—but he wouldn't risk the lives of the others. I can hardly understand such absolute courage, can you? Within an hour the place was in ashes.

"Of course, you know how people like to embroider simple events. Some of the monks claimed to have seen a shadowy figure at nightfall moving majestically out of the forest, into the monastery, and up to the Abbot's room, which was in a sort of tower. That was just before the fire started.

"Then there was that unstable Polish monk, a sort of menial. When the flames were at their height, he saw in them a vision of Christ—smiling ever so slightly, seated in the *padmasana* or lotus posture, His hands raised in the *mudra* of Divine Teaching."

The children were coming down the mountain toward us. I began to convey to Joan, by gestures, a certain restlessness that had taken hold of me. It was getting late, and after nightfall the trails in those precipitous mountains are not altogether safe, especially for the outsider whose gaze may be momentarily distracted by the sight of moonlight on snow over a considerable area and at some height.





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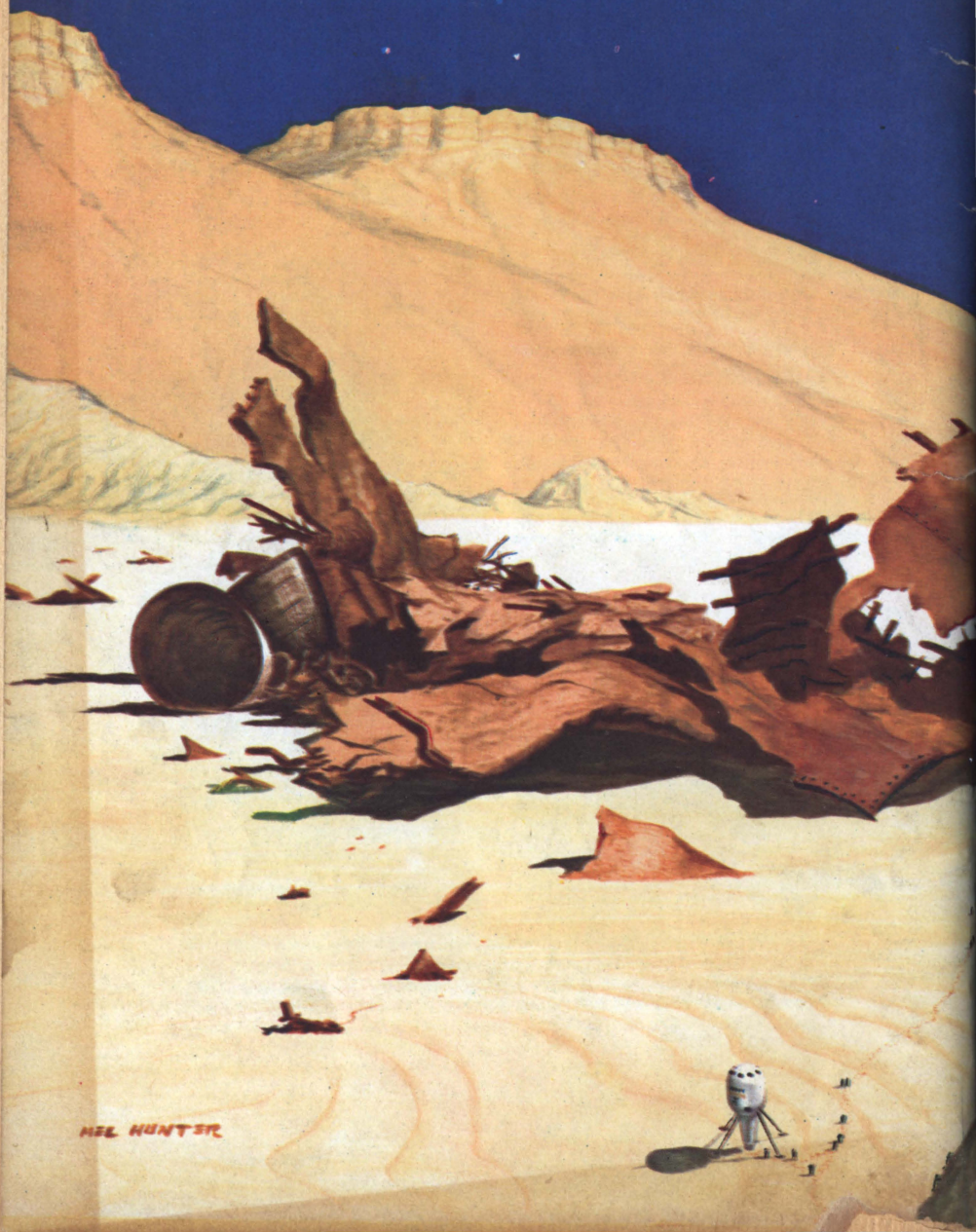
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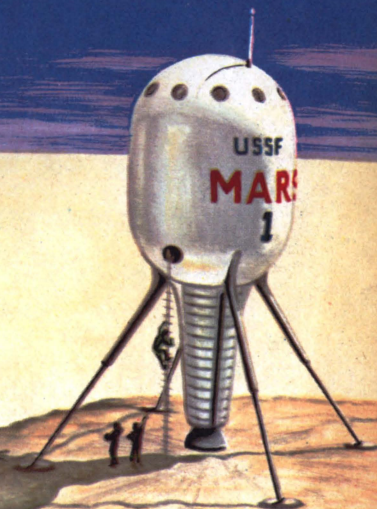
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